

THE CHALLENGES OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY  
OF THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY:  
A CASE STUDY IN KINGSTON AND ST. CATHERINE, JAMAICA

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To my husband and classmate, Clayton, who has daily encouraged and  
supported me.

To my daughter, Sheree, for her encouragement throughout periods of study.

God bless you both.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

COGOP      Church of God of Prophecy

## ABSTRACT

God loves his creation, male and female, and desires that through Jesus all would be saved. Leaders are given to the Christian church, and all are expected to work together to fulfill the Great Commission. Within different denominations women are permitted or restricted from being involved in the Christian ministry.

The Church of God of Prophecy International is a Pentecostal movement that has given partial clerical rights to female ministers since 1996. In the Caribbean island of Jamaica, female ministers have for many years been involved in equipping the people of God and building up the body of Christ. The purpose of this research is to ascertain the nature of the challenges that they encounter, the biblical perspective on the issue, and what can be done to alleviate the impact of the challenges. The researcher maintains that the biblical and theological perspective regarding women and their full participation in the church is of great significance and desires to unveil recommendations that can help to alleviate some of the problems of these women.

A qualitative research-descriptive case study was done using a survey/questionnaire and unstructured interviews. The main participants were twelve female pastors and six male pastors of the Church of God of Prophecy in St. Catherine and Kingston, Jamaica. Based on the results, much teaching needs to be done to help people in the region to move in the power of the Holy Spirit beyond gender barriers, patriarchal interpretation of God's Word, human preferences, and institutional practices for the good of humanity, the advancement of the church, and the glory of God.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

#### **Introduction**

God loves people and has a definite plan to save the whole world. Jesus came to seek and save the lost, and he established the church to continue with the mission of reaching out to people. According to Ephesians 4:11-13, to ensure that the church fulfills the purpose of God,

Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

In the Old as well as in the New Covenant, God has used both males and females in the working out of his purposes in the earth. However, throughout the history of the Christian church, multiple different perspectives regarding the role of the female gender have been developed and embraced with accompanying complex problems. There are varying opinions and cultural limitations to this issue, and effort must be made to ascertain the Creator's intention by examining the biblical perspective. The task of leadership in the church was not assigned to any one specific gender: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

The participation of women in the ministry of the church is prohibited in some denominations. In others it is still being debated, and it is allowed to some extent in

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise specified, Scripture quotations are from the New International Version, by Biblica, 2011.

the Church of God of Prophecy, where women are now being ordained-appointed, consecrated, and granted authority to perform duties as servants of God. Several women are now being appointed as pastors who are responsible for the well-being of congregations. Are the women in ministry able to fulfill their role in equipping the people of God and building the body of Christ? What are their challenges?

According to Bishop Joe Aldred, “a challenge is never passive or inconsequential; there are always consequences. We fail to respond at our peril. Our lives comprise a series of contests, challenges, and how we respond to them determine the quality of our existence.”<sup>2</sup> He further postulates that we can have better understanding of challenges when the effort is made to examine the “nature or character of the challenges we face, the significance or implications of the challenges we face, the preparation needed for the challenges we face; the courage to actualize victory over the challenges . . .”<sup>3</sup>

The objective of this study is to examine the nature and causes of the challenges faced by women in the ministry of Church of God of Prophecy in St. Catherine and Kingston, Jamaica; and to ascertain how their challenges can be addressed so that women will be better able to fulfill their calling in an effective, biblical manner for the advancement of the kingdom of God.

## **Women in Patriarchal Societies**

“Culture is the medium through which we begin to understand ourselves as gendered subjects. It is the vehicle through which patriarchal domination is

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<sup>2</sup> Joe Aldred, *Thinking Outside the Box on Race, Faith, and Life* (London: Hansib Publications, 2013), 99-100.

<sup>3</sup> Aldred, *Thinking Outside the Box on Race, Faith, and Life*, 99-100.

normalized.<sup>4</sup> There is the traditional, prevailing gender hierarchy and norms in society which is a part of the organizational structure and practices of the prevailing culture. In many parts of the world, there has been gender stratification arising from cultural ideologies, institutional practices, and beliefs that endorse male dominance in society and in the church. Many societies have been dominated by patriarchal values with men being regarded as the ones capable of occupying the public sphere; men have had dominion over women, who were classified as the weaker vessel and inferior. Today, in many regions worldwide, men still hold a superior role and control over women both in the secular and in the sacred areas of life.

In many cases the system in patriarchal societies projects and still endorses male dominance. Men are regarded as the ones with ability, strength, and power; they occupy superior positions in nearly all existing areas and women are regarded as subordinates, mothers and housewives.

Women have at times been regarded as, at best, second class members of the human race. Sometimes they suffer much abuse and neglect but are expected to be submissive, and to give full attention to their home and family. In some places they have not been allowed to vote or to exercise other rights enjoyed by men, and wives have in some cases been regarded as virtually the property of their husbands.<sup>5</sup>

## **Caribbean Women**

Caribbean countries were colonized by patriarchal European nations, with male and female slaves from Africa brought in to work on the sugar plantations. In the post-emancipation era, the nations became patriarchal societies, where power, privilege, and status were attached to the male gender and women were regarded as second-class citizens, subordinate to men and incapable of making certain valid

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<sup>4</sup> Linden Lewis, “Masculinity, the Political Economy of the Body, and Patriarchal Power in the Caribbean,” in *Gender in the Twenty-first Century: Caribbean Perspectives, Visions, and Possibilities*, ed. Barbara Bailey and Elsa Leo-Rhynie (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2004), 257.

<sup>5</sup> Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1985), 545.

decisions.<sup>6</sup> Many years have passed, but there is still the historical, traditional, prevailing gender hierarchy and norms in society as part of the organizational structure and practices of the prevailing Caribbean culture. And it still stands that gender inequality is alive in the culture, with men being the dominant ones.

The Caribbean woman has a historical experience that makes her different from all other global women. She has suffered much loss, particularly the loss of identity. Reverend Hyacinth Boothe, a Jamaican female pastor who has done much study about women in ministry in the Caribbean, particularly Jamaica, addresses the question of identity by placing emphasis on the obvious: that women are women. She states that if God did not want women in ministry, then there is no reason why men should not be allowed to continue to hold onto power and to legislate and dominate in the decision-making process of church and world.<sup>7</sup> A woman is sometimes referred to as schizophrenic, not truly knowing who she is. But although she has been in bondage to an experience that she did not create, her liberation is in her hand.<sup>8</sup> Some of the problems encountered by many women are linked to race and gender. Gender analysis is a popular theme today, and it highlights the past complex lives of Caribbean women. However, contemporary women must learn to relinquish the shackles of the colonial heritage and not be

blinded to ways that replicate ideological heritage of Eurocentric, misogynistic gender stereotypes and idealizations to the disadvantage of our women. Today's Caribbean women like their foremothers live with the struggle to survive religious and social systems that hamstring them in multiple ways. Their means, devious or forthright, ought to be celebrated, acknowledged and lifted up, just as male examples are.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> "Gender Relations in the Caribbean," accessed August 14, 2017, <http://www2.dickinson.edu/departments/geol/disasterhomepage/sochomepage/GENDER/goodcaribbeanoverviewfinal.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Hyacinth Boothe, "Women—Ministerial Formation and Ministry: A Caribbean Perspective," *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies* 17, no. 1 (April 1996): 14.

<sup>8</sup> Boothe, "Women—Ministerial Formation and Ministry," 15.

<sup>9</sup> Althea Spencer Miller "Women and Christianity in the Caribbean" in *Women and Christianity*, Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan and Karen Jo Torjesen, eds, (Santa Barbara, CA; ABC-CLIO, 2010), 275.

Positive, honest actions of both male and female should be affirmed and celebrated.

Jamaica, a Caribbean postcolonial society, was one of the major sugar-producing islands. In the nineteenth century, men and women were taken as slaves from Africa to work on the sugar plantations in Jamaica. They came with their culture and religion, and so did the European colonizers, resulting in a multiethnic, multicultural, and multiracial society. It is felt that the patriarchal ethos supported male domination; even now, many years later, some Jamaican women still tend to defer to male authority for some positions, so long as men are available. There is the oral tradition where much has been communicated from one generation to another; some cultural traditions play a significant role in how people think and act.

Although Jamaica gained independence from Britain, it still remained that the major voices in society were regulated by men; based on legal, economic, and cultural traditions in the island, it is the norm for males to be in positions of authority, consequently, it is assumed by many Christians that in the church men should be in charge, they should lead, and obedient women submit to their leadership. There is the popular perception that for top positions of leadership, men should be selected since they still to some extent hold a superior role and control over women.

Over the years, changes have taken place in the Jamaican society as more and more women have become educated and have made progress in professions that were once dominated by men; surveys done in the nation have shown that women have been occupying many more managerial positions than men. In the past, females were viewed as lacking in education, incapable of leadership, and incompetent, but changes have been occurring; one of many examples is the fact that Jamaica had its first and only female prime minister, Portia Lucretia Simpson-Miller (2006–2007; 2012–

2016), who is said to have bridged the gender gap in terms of women in public administration and has opened the door and smashed the proverbial glass ceiling so that other women can go through. She claims that many Jamaican women continue to make their mark in their various spheres of endeavor in spite of the many odds.<sup>10</sup>

### **Caribbean Women in Ministry**

Within the church the call is frequently made for people to come to God. Females are usually the ones who promptly respond, but some later learn that their willingness to heed the call of God on their live to serve in the ministry of the church is prohibited because of their gender, color, and other externals such as cosmetics and the choice of clothing. The church in the Caribbean has been observed and criticized regarding the various positive or negative stances taken by some denominations on the issue of female involvement in the leading positions. During the keynote address delivered at the 2003 Mona Academic Conference in Jamaica, the speaker, Mia Motley, posited that “for the matter of women’s ordination to be an issue in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century is an indication of how far the church is behind the rest of society.”<sup>11</sup>

It would seem that in the minds of many Caribbean people there is a link between colonial ideas about gender, and Christian teachings, resulting in distrust for women. Those views are established, expressed, maintained, and validated by both the church and society, thus causing tension between the church and women. The “newer narratives celebrating the admission of women into ordained ministry or in

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<sup>10</sup> Andrea Braham, “PM Joins Global Leaders in Call for More Women Political Leaders,” November 28, 2013, accessed July 1, 2017, <http://jis.gov.jm/pm-joins-global-leaders-call-women-political-leaders/>.

<sup>11</sup> Mia Motley, “Foreword” in *Gender in the Twenty-first Century: Caribbean Perspectives, Visions, and Possibilities*, ed. Barbara Bailey and Elsa Leo-Rhynie (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2003), xxviii.

Caribbean ecumenical leadership, have not changed that meta-narrative.”<sup>12</sup> Women in ministry experience challenges both within the church and society; it is understandable since the church is made up of people from the society.

Leadership in religion has been predominantly the prerogative of men, and “there has been more ferment, inside and outside the church, about whether women should be leaders, what kind of leaders, and with what scope of leadership, than in almost any other arena.”<sup>13</sup> It is assumed by some people that in society and in the church men should be in charge and lead, and obedient women should submit to their leadership. Although slavery has been abolished, the legacies continue to influence the attitudes, assumptions, and worldviews of the descendants. “The church is affected by the culture in which it is situated. The problem comes when we argue that only men may be leaders and only women may be homemakers.”<sup>14</sup>

Boothe postulates that

perhaps the Caribbean experience highlights as no other can, the trauma, and dilemma of being a woman. Not only are we faced with the problem of gender, but also of race and class. The abolition of slavery for black Caribbean women, meant liberation from plantation bondage, but cultural norms dictated that their bondage to their male partners remained intact. It also meant the continuation of subjection, as black women.<sup>15</sup>

Religion plays a major role in the lives of Jamaicans, particularly women, who over the years have been in the majority in church attendance and participation. Diana Fox examined the role of gender in Jamaican life and came to the conclusion that

no newcomer to Jamaica can overlook the pervasiveness of the church in daily life. Tour guides and locals alike inform visitors that there are more churches per square mile in Jamaica than in any other country in the world. This piece

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<sup>12</sup> Kirk-Duggan and Torjesen, *Women and Christianity*, 275.

<sup>13</sup> Elaine Storkey, “Women in Leadership,” in *Challenges of Black Pentecostal Leadership in the Twenty-first Century* ed. Phyllis Thompson (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2013), 68.

<sup>14</sup> Elaine Storkey, “Women in Leadership,” *Challenges of Black Pentecostal Leadership in the Twenty-first Century* ed. Phyllis Thompson, 75.

<sup>15</sup> Boothe, “Women—Ministerial Formation and Ministry,” 19.

of trivia symbolizes the extent to which church life and religious beliefs permeate so many aspects of daily life, both reflecting and shaping gender ideologies and relationships. As in any other area of Jamaican life, the leaders of most churches are men, performing public, status accruing roles such as preaching and collecting the offering. However, the majority of members are women, who are responsible for more inconspicuous, typically domestic, tasks and they are more highly represented in church organizations. Men and women believe that women are more spiritual than men, which is to say, more likely to become ecstatic in a service, a notion that reflects the role of the church with respect to women's suffering malaise and healing.<sup>16</sup>

It still stands that positions of leadership have been predominantly male-dominated, accompanied by much confusion, inside and outside the church, about whether women should also be leaders. Various positions based on biblical interpretations are embraced about women in ministry: there are churches that forbid women to speak in the church, some allow a woman to speak only accompanied by a man, and some will allow women to minister to other women and children. Fox says,

The leadership of women in the church is unusual in Jamaica. It is a realm of power reserved mainly for men. However, the same women who sit modestly in the pews as members of the congregation will become filled with stature and authority when they are invited to the altar to share a story, or to preach as pastor. Women move comfortably from one set of gendered expectations to another.<sup>17</sup>

Based on investigations carried out, Boothe further points out that in the past, there lay within the Jamaican cultural tradition the custom that authorizes women to perform religious rites as priestesses, healers and prophetesses. Contrary to this pattern in the culture, Western Christianity brought the perception of the inferiority of women and their exclusion from ministry. Women with deep spiritual experiences have suffered repression, contrary to the Gospel.<sup>18</sup>

At some points in history, women were allowed some freedom in ministry and at other times, varying degrees of restrictions were enforced.

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<sup>16</sup> Diana J. Fox, *Cultural DNA: Gender at the Root of Everyday Life in Rural Jamaica* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2010), 118.

<sup>17</sup> Fox, *Cultural DNA*, 135.

<sup>18</sup> Boothe, "Women—Ministerial Formation and Ministry," 19.

Traditionally there have been male-dominated positions in society and in church. Now when women enter leadership in the church, they are in some cases considered to be stepping into the domain that belongs to men. Many people will accept the labor of women behind the scenes, but problems arise when women demonstrate authority and leadership qualities or desires. Over the years women have been active in evangelism, care groups, prayer ministry, and outreach activities, they demonstrated that they have the ability to perform almost any task required of them. The concern here is not for the secular society but for the church, where many women who claim to be called by God are involved in ministry.

Christianity is the most dominant religion in Jamaica, and the debate about women in ministry is taking place in many denominations. The Seventh-day Adventists are the largest Christian denomination in the island, and they have been having their discussions; their first female pastor in Jamaica was appointed recently, in February 2017.<sup>19</sup> While some churches in Jamaica allow women to be church leaders, others deny women the opportunity to use their God-given gifts and talents; they claim that Scripture supports their negative view. However, it cannot be denied that inside and outside of the Christian church female leadership is on the increase.

The role of women in church leadership and ministry is an issue that has been a challenge for both male and female throughout the ages; there have been ongoing debates with no one set conclusion. In some parts of the world and in some denominations, there are those who are totally against women serving in any ministerial leadership positions, and although women have worked assiduously in ministry, their roles have not been affirmed like that of their male counterparts. Race and gender are among the barriers imposed by the church to prevent God-called

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<sup>19</sup> Alisa Williams, “Central Jamaica Conference Employs First Female Pastor,” *Spectrum*, May 2017, accessed May 21, 2017, <http://spectrummagazine.org/article/2017/03/01/central-jamaica-conference-employs-first-female-pastor>.

qualified woman from going beyond a certain level which is referred to as the “stained glass ceiling.”<sup>20</sup> “Few churches exist where women hold positions as church officers . . . It is as though the power structure in the church and ministry is labelled with a big sign: ‘For Men Only—God Says So.’”<sup>21</sup>

In response some women have retreated into silence; some in frustration have been church hopping, and others are still going forward, trying to use their gifts and talents to equip God’s people and to build up the body of Christ. As Aida Spencer in her text, *Beyond the Curse*, asks, “Is it not time for the church to encourage and affirm women to begin and continue to personify the wisdom of God in their very own lives? The church needs strong, wise women to preach and to teach.”<sup>22</sup> I am in agreement that it is now time for women in the church to be affirmed as they use their gifts and talents; women are in the majority in many churches, and those in leadership must understand their role and be encouraged to go forward with the work of the Lord. Lee Brady writes that “it is time for the church to banish prideful patriarchal attitudes. We must repent and call women out of the shadows and into the realm of authority God has ordained for all who follow the Savior.”<sup>23</sup>

### **Women in Ministry Within the Pentecostal Church in Jamaica**

Of significance is the prophetic word given by Joel that God would pour out the Holy Spirit upon all flesh and both male and female would prophesy (Joel 2:28-29). On the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out, women were numbered among those who were filled with the Spirit and spoke in tongues (Acts

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<sup>20</sup> Christine Smith, *Beyond the Stained-Glass Ceiling: Equipping and Encouraging Female Pastors* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2013), ix.

<sup>21</sup> Patricia Gundry, *Woman Be Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: Suitcase Books, 1977), 12.

<sup>22</sup> Aida Besançon Spencer, *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1985), 131.

<sup>23</sup> J. Lee Grady, *Ten Lies the Church Tells Women: How the Bible Has Been Misused to Keep Women in Bondage* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2006), 10.

1:14-15; 2:1-4). In some places, Joel's prophetic word and Peter's preaching that "sons and daughters would prophesy" have been the key encouragement for many women to enter Christian ministry.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, a new global religious culture has been created by Pentecostalism, which refers to different groups of Christians who believe in baptism with the Holy Spirit, with the evidence of speaking in tongues and manifestation of gifts of the Holy Spirit as occurred on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Initially, poor people were the most receptive to the Pentecostal message and experience, and the majority of worshippers were women. There are different sorts of Pentecostal churches with different structures and an increasing number of supporters.

Some Pentecostal denominations have had ordained females and female bishops although generally the locate woman is the subordinate gender. In these denominations the pneumatological impulse outweighs gender considerations for ordination, as women often participate in worship as readers, speakers, and interpreters of glossolalia (technical term for speaking in tongues), singers, aisle stewards, dancers and leaders of women's study groups though not as preachers when adult males are present.<sup>24</sup>

While some churches are having debates and identifying the barriers to freedom for women in ministry, others have gone past the resistance and are ordaining female bishops and telling of the progress being made in kingdom advancement.

Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, the second biggest and the oldest Oneness Pentecostal group, have been ordaining female bishops. Recently two females have been selected who will be the first and second with dioceses, meaning that they will oversee and govern male pastors. In addition to leading their respective churches in the United States, they will oversee districts in Africa. Both women will be consecrated during the annual convention of the church, to be held in Nashville,

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<sup>24</sup> Miller, "Women and Christianity in the Caribbean," 275.

Tennessee, August 4, 2017. The leader of the church claims that the concern is for the gospel to go forward; it does not matter if it is carried by male or female. These women have not experienced pushback to their ordination; resistance to female bishops has subsided, especially as the older generation retires.<sup>25</sup>

The phenomenal growth of Pentecostalism has had great influence on the Christian church in nearly all countries of the world, including Jamaica. According to Delford Davis, founder of the Power of Faith Ministries, a large Pentecostal church in Jamaica, “although there are several churches which still do not allow women to preach or hold leadership positions . . . the shift is so great it would be easier to consider the Church as a ‘women’s club.’ If you check the involvement of women in [leadership roles] in the Church today, it is far greater than men.”<sup>26</sup> Davis also referred to the highly respected Reverend Carmen Stewart, leader of the Pentecostal Gospel Temple, who has been in ministry for more than fifty years and has also worked in health and community service. Reverend Stewart stated that “there was much less antagonism to women preaching now than several years ago. One reason for this is that more women are exposed to higher education and, as a result, are prepared for higher office in the Church.”<sup>27</sup>

With the rise of Pentecostalism, a new religious culture has been created which allows women in some ways to respond to the call of God on their lives. Diane Austin-Broos, who has investigated and written much about religion in Jamaica, postulates that “Jamaicans negotiate through Pentecostalism issues of race and culture

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<sup>25</sup> Holly Meyer, “Two Women Picked as First Female Bishops to Lead Pentecostal Denomination’s Dioceses,” *Tennessean*, July 28, 2017, accessed date July 31, 2017, <http://www.tennessean.com/story/news/religion/2017/07/27/2-women-picked-first-female-bishops-lead-pentecostal-denominations-dioceses/470135001/>.

<sup>26</sup> Livern Barrett, “Women to the Frontline—More Females Emerging As Church Leaders,” *The Gleaner* (Jamaica), January 2010, accessed May 27, 2017, [www.jamaica-gleaner.mobi](http://www.jamaica-gleaner.mobi).

<sup>27</sup> Barrett, “Women to the Frontline.”

and also gender and class.”<sup>28</sup> The Pentecostal churches are growing exponentially and have become the most successful Christian missionary movement of the twentieth century. In Pentecostalism, there is focus on the person and work of the Holy Spirit, and how that is interpreted tends to vary from one place to another. Many people will agree that in the lives of both Christian women and men the Holy Spirit has brought about significant transformation, equipping them to demonstrate spiritual gifting and empowerment in ministry. However, although women have worked in many different areas in the church and are making tremendous contributions to the ministry of the church for the advancement of God’s kingdom, they have in some cases been denied the privilege of serving God as directed by the Spirit and their roles have not been affirmed like that of men.

Boothe has personal experience and is familiar with Jamaicans in their setting along with their problems. With the increase of women in ministry, she found it necessary to give some suggestions to help prepare women in ministry for the challenges that they will definitely encounter. She states that

it is essential to count the cost at the onset since, “there is no true servant of the Lord who is not challenged by the Lord to deny self, take up the cross and follow Him—and at this point in time it will be more costly for women than for men to be the Lord’s Minister. Whether we like it or not, eyes are fixed upon us, the eyes of the congregation, the eyes of men, the eyes of society. There is expected of us a dedication in excess of that expected of men, and we need in our ministerial formation to put on Christ.”<sup>29</sup>

In spite of prevailing challenges, it would seem that women are not stepping back from ministry; consequently, it is in order to admonish them to prepare themselves for the future.

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<sup>28</sup> Diane Austin-Broos, *Jamaica Genesis: Religion and the Politics of Moral Orders* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 244.

<sup>29</sup> Boothe, “Women—Ministerial Formation and Ministry,” 10.

## **Historical Perspective of Women in Ministry in the Church of God of Prophecy**

Church of God of Prophecy is a Pentecostal denomination which was founded by Ambrose Jessup Tomlinson (1865–1943); its international offices are located in Cleveland, Tennessee. There are congregations and missions in 135 nations of the world; this includes nearly every island in the Caribbean. Early in the history of the church there were discussions about the ordination of women as deaconesses and evangelists. Several women, when they were empowered by the Holy Spirit, were not concerned or bothered by gender, race, education, or social status; instead, they got busy sharing the gospel and many people were converted. Between 1904 and 1914 women were allowed to perform some functions and to exercise their gifts as directed by the Holy Spirit. This was short-lived; authorization was cancelled the following year.

In those early years, when the role of women was being discussed in society and in church, Tomlinson said, “Let the good sisters feel at perfect liberty to preach the gospel, pray for the sick or well, testify, exhort etc., but humbly hold themselves aloof from taking charge of the government affairs.”<sup>30</sup> In giving an interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34, Tomlinson stated that women were to keep silent in the church as it relates to church government.

Church of God of Prophecy in Jamaica began in 1923. Presently, there are 307 seven congregations in all fourteen parishes. Approximately three-quarters of the forty thousand members in the Church of God of Prophecy in Jamaica are women. There are 191 male pastors and 116 female pastors. There are female pastors in every parish. Women in ministry in the Church of God of Prophecy are not a recent phenomenon, since for many years they have played significant roles. Over the years,

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<sup>30</sup> A. J. Tomlinson. “Paul’s Statements Considered,” *Church of God Evangel*, September 18, 1915, 5.

females have been allowed to minister to the whole church and to participate in ministry with restricted roles and functions. They have been instrumental in missionary work resulting in the planting of a significant number of the Church of God of Prophecy congregations in the island. In some local churches, women were appointed as “leaders,” not pastors; they were allowed to preach and teach but not to baptize converts or conduct the business conference of the church. Eventually male pastors were assigned to those congregations and the women occupied supportive roles. However, it would seem that with the plurality of cultures and the religious climate that existed in Jamaica over the years, problems were always associated with the role of women in both religious and secular society. There were always questions about the role of women within the church.

The debate about women in church leadership varies from one church to another. The Church of God (known in the Caribbean as the New Testament Church of God) and the Church of God of Prophecy were originally one organization founded by Tomlinson, who said that women should not engage in church business. In both churches women are now allowed to be pastors. In the Church of God, women are presently expressing the desire to be ordained as bishops, a status that is necessary in order for them to be appointed to the Church Executive Council which is responsible for the complete daily operation of the denomination (church business).<sup>31</sup> The need for female bishops is not yet being discussed in the Church of God of Prophecy, probably because women are presently engaged in church business. They are part of

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<sup>31</sup> Adrienne B. Gaines, “Church of God Debates Role of Women,” *Charisma Magazine*, August 5, 2010, accessed July 31, 2017, <https://www.charismamag.com/site-archives/570-news/featured-news/11656-church-of-god-debates-role-of-women>.

the International Presbytery (which is comprised of all state, regional, national, and general appointees at the international offices).<sup>32</sup>

In each local church, all women were encouraged to be in attendance at the church's business conference and remain silently prayerful for men to get wisdom and direction from God. They were not given the opportunity to participate in discussions or even to ask questions since they were said to be showing forth the glory of God in being the glory of the men.<sup>33</sup>

In the past, the Church of God of Prophecy made good progress with male pastors and female leaders; the laity was comprised of people from communities who were raised in a patriarchal system where they were accustomed to men being in charge. It is quite possible that people may not even realize that they were socialized to have prejudices and to be biased about female pastors. Some will still argue that women are to be homemakers and helpers for the men. It is possible to find male ministers who may not be supportive of women in ministry, since they are of the opinion that men, not women, should be leaders. There have been cases where men without qualifications were placed to lead women who were well educated, spiritually mature, and quite active in ministry.

Both laity and leaders of the church from around the world gather together every two years to form the International Assembly, which is the highest decision-making body in the church.

The General Overseer of the church establishes the program and acts as general moderator for the Assembly. During discussions of doctrinal and business matters, every member has an equal voice. Decisions of Biblical

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<sup>32</sup> International Presbytery working document, Church of God of Prophecy, 99th Assembly, Orlando, Florida, July 13-17, 2016.

<sup>33</sup> Church of God of Prophecy, General Assembly Minutes and Ministry Policy Manual, Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center, 1996.

doctrine and polity are made by “one accord” rather than by a majority vote, whereas administrative matters are settled by overwhelming consensus.<sup>34</sup>

Decisions made are considered to be binding on all members. One of the special committees appointed by the general overseer is the Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee, which is asked to serve the church by preparing an exposition for dialogue on universal matters of biblical doctrine, theology, ethics, and polity for General Assembly consideration.<sup>35</sup>

When the assembly committee researches a topic, their findings are sent for discussion to every nation where the church is located. The feedback from the nations helps to give those in the international assembly an idea of the international perspective on the topic. Not every member of the church can attend the international assembly for several reasons, particularly the acquisition of visas and needed finances. Decisions made at the international level are considered binding, but there will always be people with different opinions; some may need further explanation. Women in ministry within the church will certainly be challenged by those who disagree with the update done by the church.

At the international assembly, when discussions take place and decisions are made, such as the one regarding women in ministry, there is usually a limited number of delegates from Jamaica and some other regions who would have been in attendance and would willingly participate in the discussion about the issue. After the assembly, national, regional, and state leaders around the world later met in their setting to ratify the decision that was already made; that only served the purpose of acknowledging and within cultural context expressing subscription to the decisions already made. It

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<sup>34</sup> 93rd Church of God of Prophecy International General Minutes and Ministry Policy Manual, Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center, 2004, 329.

<sup>35</sup> 93rd Church of God of Prophecy International General Minutes and Ministry Policy Manual, 331.

was made clear that women were not exempted from ministry but should be protected from danger if the culture forbids their involvement. Care must be taken if the culture forbids women, for example, in Muslim countries.

Decisions are made at the international assembly and sent around the world. The discussion surrounding the inclusion of women in church leadership is often loaded with patriarchal presuppositions and other traditions. But Jamaicans are aware of all the functions that women in ministry are allowed to perform, and many do not hesitate to demonstrate that they are no longer under male authority. Was there a meeting held in Jamaica by the national leaders to give a clear biblical perspective and to ensure that the new position was thoroughly explained to the people? Due to cultural traditions and different ways of how some postcolonial people have been socialized to interpret the world, people, and their roles, probably special discussions should have been set up for the people in the islands. People in Jamaica are accustomed to men being in leadership positions, and historically Church of God of Prophecy has only ordained male pastors. Would everyone readily accept female pastors?

### **Women in Ministry in the Church of God of Prophecy Presently**

Changes came in 1996, when the Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee was asked to study the rights and privileges of women in ministerial service and make recommendations to the church. Based on studies done and the discussions that took place in the international assembly, the recommendation made was passed by one accord,<sup>36</sup> so female roles were adjusted to allow women to carry out full functions of

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<sup>36</sup> One accord means that those who opposed the recommendation either abstained from the process or submitted to the majority.

ministry for the advancement of the ministry. The certificate presently given to each minister reads,

This is to certify that [name] is hereby appointed and commissioned as a MINISTER in the CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY and is therefore entitled to the respect, rights, and privileges granted to ordained ministers of the Gospel. He/she is authorized to do all the work that may devolve upon him/her as a minister of the Gospel: to preach and defend the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to establish churches, to baptize, to administer the Lord's Supper and Washing of the Saints' Feet, and as a pastor to perform marriages that are biblically valid, as outlined in the New Testament and interpreted by the International Assembly.<sup>37</sup>

Women are ordained and granted pastoral authority; does that mean that all is well and there are no challenges?

Those women who claim to have been called by God to enter the ministry, if endorsed by their local church, are set forth as lay ministers, and some are further appointed as pastors. The change in the position taken by the institution regarding female ministers automatically created a challenge because some people in society are not flexible. They embrace one position and may not even understand the reason for the change, so they resent the women who are now performing additional roles without the men.

I wonder how much emphasis has been placed on admonishing the women who present themselves for ministry, to analyze their motives, do honest self-examination, and identify their objectives and expectations. Ministry is accompanied by several challenges, and each individual should understand that it is not a bed of roses. The leader who will succeed in equipping believers and building up the body of Christ must be a student of the Word of God. The position of some in ministry is that people with the call of God on their lives should respond, allow the Holy Spirit to

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<sup>37</sup> 93rd Church of God of Prophecy International General Minutes and Ministry Policy Manual, 2016, 97.

direct, and not allow themselves to be bothered by gender, race, social status, criticism, or any other attitude or utterance.

In the past women were not appointed as pastors; male pastors were asked to supervise the churches that were directed by women. The church polity then created problems for the females in ministry since they had to wait until male pastors were available to dedicate infants, schedule baptisms, give the sacraments, and moderate the quarterly business conference. For some this was difficult and discouraging, since that must have given the signal that females were not truly pastors. Based on the church's initial interpretation of Scripture the women did ministry under a man's authority.

The norm has been for female ministers not to participate in the ordination or of elders or bishops, and they are not appointed as overseers of parishes or districts, nations, or states.<sup>38</sup> However, changes are taking place in some parts of the world and women are being appointed as overseers. In Jamaica while there are many female pastors, the custom continues to be male dominated leadership at the top level. This researcher, as an insider in Church of God of Prophecy in Jamaica, has done much observation and is unaware of any study that has been done concerning women in ministry. There is very little written about ministry in this region.

### **Perceived Barriers of Women in Ministry in Jamaica**

It would seem that female pastors do need to work harder than the men before they eventually gain acceptance in some places. Women in ministry are not given the same level of respect and acceptance as their male colleagues. Some individuals in the church have grown accustomed to being led by men and find it somewhat difficult to

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<sup>38</sup> Adrian L. Varlack, *Foundations—Church of God of Prophecy: Concise History, Polity, Doctrine, and Future* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 2010), 159.

accept a female as their leader. Jamaicans are expressive, and it is as if the men can be heard saying, “I don’t want no woman pastor” or “I don’t want no woman over me.” Some people, male and female, are adamant that a woman should not be the leader. In some cases, this is an initial response which changes later when a relationship is built between laity and leader.

Impediments faced by women in ministry are usually connected to the organization of the denomination, gender biases, and resource allocation, among other factors. Some “women themselves believe male leaders to be superior to women in influencing upward, delegating and even networking, a trait usually considered more feminine. These perceptions remain consistent in both secular and non-profit Christian settings.”<sup>39</sup>

Some of the females in ministry have personal challenges, in addition to those encountered in ministry; they are overworked, have challenges connected to their families, are parents of young children, with secular employment and community involvement and are engaged in ministry. Unfortunately, some women in ministry view themselves as less than, as inferior. So, while some women claimed to have a call from God and desire to be obedient, others comply with being asked to be the pastors for congregations and anticipate the eventual emergence and appointment of male pastors.

In order to be effective in ministry, ministerial formation is vital, and there is the need for ongoing studies; some problems arise due to the kind or lack of ministerial formation and the unwillingness of the leader to do further studies. Several women in ministry are now scholars, and they will undoubtedly be learning new approaches to ministry. For example, the pastor may want to adopt a missional

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<sup>39</sup> Halee Grey Scott, “Study: Female Pastors Are on the Rise,” *Christianity Today*, February 26, 2017, accessed July 31, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/women/2017/february/study-female-pastors-are-on-rise.html>.

approach to community needs; I can foresee a challenge with the mature folks who want to use the same tried and failed methods and may not be supportive of a new approach. Instead of seeking to understand the mission of the church and seeking to engage the people in the community, they may rather prefer to stay within the building, listen to sermons, sing, testify, be happy, and hope that the unbelievers will come to church.

The life of some people is compartmentalized: natural and spiritual. That women in ministry have encountered challenges is not a new issue; women in the ancient world had several challenges, and the lives of women have been shaped, enhanced, or restricted by the norms, practices, and expectations of the culture in which they live. Some have heard the careless remarks spoken by others to hurt and discourage women instead of encouragement for good works. Undoubtedly, all ministers will experience some challenges, but are the men conscious of the additional challenges that the women experience, primarily because of their gender? For men in ministry some things may be easier because of the male-dominated power structure in the nation. Male pastors are probably not conscious of the biases, the ignoring of or challenges to female ideas, hard work, gifts, and talents. They probably know some challenges of female pastors and must be encouraged to let their voice be heard in support of the women in ministry. I wonder, are they being governed by their personal feelings and traditional influences, or do they have knowledge and proper understanding of the biblical passages that are frequently quoted?

Men are usually the ones selected to be parish or national overseers. Parish overseers have supervision of eleven churches in the smallest parish and sixty churches in the largest parish. The national overseer supervises all 307 churches, assisted by the parish overseers. Supervision of several congregations is considered

by some individuals as a large responsibility that should be given to men and not to women. Major decisions within the nation are made primarily by the overseers, and they are all men.

For some local congregations in some communities, if by chance no man can be found, women called supervisors or coordinators (not parish overseers) are appointed and sent to the place with the need. How much support is given to those women? How are they faring? Leaders who play a significant role in the advancement of male and female pastors are needed. God needs both men and women to participate in his mission on earth (see Galatians 3:28).

Directly and indirectly people are confronted with the social challenges of unemployment and poverty, along with the social ills of crime and violence. Some churches are located in communities where the people are very poor, struggling to survive, and have little finances to give in support of ministry. Due to the lack of financial resources, there are limited tithes and offerings, and that affects the local church and the pastor, since the church is a nonprofit entity that depends on the free-will giving of members and friends. A few churches are situated in crime-prone areas, and those pastors are frequently confronted with the loss and suffering that people experience.

The Bible contains the word of God with instructions to all people, for how the work of God must be done in the earth. Women in ministry have met with various challenges and have been part of ongoing debates, based on cultural perceptions and interpretation of Scripture. The real premise or foundation on which the argument rests is the Word of God correctly interpreted. Boothe quoted Mariah Baah, who expressed the view that “in all countries, the Bible has been used as a weapon against women, denying equality with men and access to leadership within the church,

specifically in the ordained ministry.”<sup>40</sup> Many persons will agree that there has been abuse and misuse of the Scriptures and each speaker insists on being correct. Many in and outside the church do not seem to understand that the Bible must be viewed in its context.

People have the tendency to twist Scripture to reflect their own position on issues; that this has been done with the issue of women in ministry. Poor exegesis leads to misinterpretation; consequently, male dominance and female subordination in church leadership is endorsed. Unfortunately, the biblical and theological framework that is used in making reference to women in ministry is not derived from Scripture rightly divided, so the debate goes on without proper resolution.

Women in ministry in Jamaica face many challenges due to lack of proper interpretation and limited understanding of the Scripture regarding the role of females. There are myths, personal interpretations, role stereotypes, sexism, the prevailing culture, and historical traditions, among other things. Based on the interpretation of the fall of the human race as presented in Genesis, some individuals will point out that Adam was created before Eve, and Eve was the one deceived by Satan, so they regard women as the ones responsible for the entrance of sin into the world. Individuals often quote 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34, that women should remain silent in the church and not have spiritual authority over men. Ephesians 5:22, which instructs wives to submit, is also often used to show that men are the ones given authority and women are expected to submit or be subjected to them.

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<sup>40</sup> Mariah Baah, quoted in Boothe, “Women—Ministerial Formation and Ministry,” 18.

## Conclusion

The number of women who work in the Church of God of Prophecy in Jamaica has been increasing. It is assumed that the church desires to have a level platform for all pastors, thereby making it possible for all to fulfill the will of God as they seek to work for the good of humanity and the advancement of God's kingdom. The debate about women in ministry continues since structure of the Church of God of Prophecy still shows some restraint on women and the prominence of men. While women have more privileges and opportunities than they had before, it still stands that the men are the ones who occupy the top leadership positions. Some plans and decisions are made by them, and whenever it is time for the selection of the national and parish leaders, men are the only ones considered for the positions.

A new religious culture has been created which allows women in some ways to respond to the call of God on their lives. Based on the Pentecostal view, God-given gifts and talents are to be used to equip believers for the work of ministry and to build up the body of Christ. According to Genesis 1:26-28, God created male and female equally and gave them dominion. Exposing the challenges and advocating for the full participation of women in ministry is not to say that woman should displace men. Both men and women would do well to serve together in ministry; undoubtedly the ministry of the church would most likely be enriched by mutual leadership. It is desired that women in ministry be affirmed by both male and female and be better able to work in confidence using their spiritual gifts so that through their leadership, believers would be equipped and the body of Christ be built up. One wonders how this denomination would be, how much advancement in the work of the kingdom there would be, if male and female were working together in deliberations and implementations.

Information for this research will be gleaned from a case study of females in the parishes of Kingston/St. Andrew and St. Catherine, Jamaica. Questionnaires will be sent to twelve female pastors and six male pastors in the parishes of Kingston and St. Catherine, Jamaica. Also, further unstructured interview will be conducted with six of the same set of female pastors. It is hoped that through studies such as this, the Church of God of Prophecy will become aware of challenges experienced by women in ministry and be guided to develop and implement policies and strategies geared toward supporting, motivating, and encouraging the women. The desired goal is for all pastors to be better able to fulfill their calling in an effective, biblical manner for the advancement of the kingdom of God. Results will undoubtedly be useful to all women in ministry in Jamaica and beyond.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

As the kingdom of God is advancing there are several scholars who are investigating and writing about the requirements of God relating to several issues.

One of the continuing hotbeds of debate in evangelical circles today is the true nature and scope of leadership and roles open to women in the church. Can a woman preach God's word? Can she serve communion, baptize, or lead in worship? Can she marry and bury? Can she serve as the lead or solo pastor? Can she teach an adult Bible class? Can she serve as a bishop, elder, or deacon? Can she put "Reverend" or "Doctor" before her name? These are questions with which numerous churches in the last fifty years have struggled and over which some have divided.<sup>1</sup>

In churches, gender discrimination exists, and it is defended on cultural or biblical grounds. Many questions are being asked and different opinions are expressed regarding women in ministry and the advancement of the church. Aida Spencer asks, "Are women called by God to ministry?" She gives the response which is that "the Bible's answer is a resounding, 'Yes.'"<sup>2</sup> In some places all around the world, in different denominations there are some who will endorse the positive response, while there are those who are adamant that God has not called women to participate in Christian ministry. There are two primary views on women in ministry; egalitarians are of the opinion that there should be equal ministry opportunities for both genders, with no gender-based restrictions; complementarians believe that ministry roles are differentiated by gender and God does not desire women to serve in church leadership.

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<sup>1</sup> Linda Belleville, "Women in Ministry: An Egalitarian Perspective," in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, ed. Stanley Gundry and James Beck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 21.

<sup>2</sup> Aida Besançon Spencer, *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1985), 135.

Spencer further states that the curse has become license for oppression, and she makes a call for serious Christians who love their Creator, honor the Scriptures, and are willing to affirm, encourage, and listen to women who desire to mirror and celebrate God. There need to be Christians who will lead and teach others about the one God, the Savior.<sup>3</sup> Thomas Schreiner is one of many who expresses the strong view that there are different roles for men and women in the church; he states that “women should not fill the role of pastor/elder/overseer.”<sup>4</sup>

There is a vast collection of literature on the role and work of women both in secular society and in the church generally. The search for published information on women in ministry in Jamaica reveals very little, and even less is available about women in ministry in the Church of God of Prophecy. In some places the debate is taking place about the role to be played by women in the leadership of the church and many different perspectives are asserted. The ministry of the Christian church is naturally accompanied by challenges of all kinds as it goes against the natural flow of the secular society. Undoubtedly, church leaders everywhere will experience all kinds of challenges; studies done reveal that “women in public ministry face many of the same joys and challenges that men in that role do, but they also face unique hardships.”<sup>5</sup> Foundational to this study on the challenges experienced by women in ministry are external factors such as how the Bible is interpreted and used, and the prevailing cultural perspective that often endorses patriarchy as the ideal norm for leadership; also of significance are internal factors such as identity issues.

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<sup>3</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 135-36.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Schreiner, “Women in Ministry: Another Complementarian Perspective,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, ed. Stanley Gundry and James Beck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 307.

<sup>5</sup> Kimberly Ervin Alexander and James Bowers. *What Women Want: Pentecostal Women Ministers Speak for Themselves* (Lanham, MD: Seymour Press, 2013), 129.

## How Biblical Passages about Women Are Interpreted and Used

In nearly all literature consulted about the role of women in Christian ministry, the authors regard the Bible as the inspired Word of God, and reference is made to the creation narrative in the Bible. In the beginning “God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). Women also are made in the image of God. The biblical idea endorsed by many scholars is that gender differences is God’s idea; both male and female were created for full and equal partnership, relationship, and dominion (Genesis 1:28). Together they were to be co-stewards of God’s resources on earth. In reference to woman, God said he would “make a helper suitable for man” (Genesis 2:18). The Bible shows human creation as being very good, but disobedience resulted in the fall of man, and that has terribly affected the whole human race; humanity is cursed and alienated from God.

Female inferiority is not what God intended, but there is a considerable array of literature that shows women from the earliest times, in nearly all societies, as being regarded as less than human and therefore unsuitable for leadership in any sphere. Women have been the ones against whom terrible discrimination has been levied in every civilization, culture, race, nation, and religion. They have been considered as unimportant, with a second-class position, and treated as an inhumane species. Women have been accused of many things that they are not, and these myths have followed from paganism into the church of the medieval age and persist to this day all over the world. It is the opinion of some people that Eve was the cause of the fall of humanity into sin, although they fail to realize that even in living out the curse the woman becomes an instrument for redemption instead of damnation.<sup>6</sup> God said, “I

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<sup>6</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 29.

will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15).

It is in relationships between people that the nature of God is revealed. Spencer and C. S. Cowles agree and emphasize that both male and female are needed in order to fully reveal the nature of God and reflect his image.<sup>7</sup> They show that God's original intent was that both male and female would in life share tasks, as well as authority; they would rule and work together, since that would reflect God more fully and help people to better understand God's nature.

Of significance is the way that the Bible is viewed and used in the discussions for and against women in ministry; often there is a superficial reading of the text. In order for there to be proper interpretation of any biblical text, one has to ascertain the historical, cultural context of that passage. It has to be borne in mind that not everyone has studied the Bible and not all lives are governed by the principles of God's Word. Biblical illiteracy is prevalent throughout the world. Yet for some of the challenges that women in ministry would experience, verses are quoted to support the position taken for or against women's involvement. On one hand, Patricia Gundry indicates that "the Bible in its account of creation does not present women as inferior to men. Both men and women are created in God's image and both are given dominion over the earth. There is no superiority or inferiority relationship."<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, Christine Smith shows that the Bible is described as "a favorite tool of oppression, used out of context, misinterpreted, and used to justify denying women leadership roles in the church."<sup>9</sup> She further describes the popular response which is

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<sup>7</sup> C. S. Cowles, *A Woman's Place? Leadership in the Church* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1993), Kindle loc. 410; Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 29.

<sup>8</sup> Patricia Gundry, *Woman Be Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1979), 19.

<sup>9</sup> Christine Smith, *Beyond the Stained-Glass Ceiling: Equipping and Encouraging Female Pastors* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2013), x.

to try to refute the misinterpretation of Scriptures and to “consider other compelling scriptures that speak positively about women in leadership roles within the church.”<sup>10</sup>

Although theologians, scholars, and commentators engage in study of the Scripture, they do not all agree on the interpretations of the passages referring to women; for some passages there are almost as many explanations as there are commentators.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, “women have been largely excluded from serious Bible study, teaching of Bible and theology in colleges on seminaries, translation from the original languages, and the pastorates, there is an almost total lack of female representation in Bible interpretation.”<sup>12</sup>

In discussions about permitting or restricting the role of women in the Christian ministry, reference is usually made to certain popular portions of Scripture such as 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12, which mention the need for women to be silent in the church. From Smith’s perspective, the text in Timothy is a “favourite tool of oppression. When used out of context, it appears to justify denying women leadership roles over men in general and pastoral roles in particular.”<sup>13</sup> Gundry refers to them as “problem passages.” She further questions, are they the work of misogynists or of writers who have patriarchal bias? Should they be taken at face value? Should they be interpreted culturally? Are they for the present time? She suggests that effort be made to “discover what the passages were attempting to teach the people to whom they were written, determine the principles implicit in them, and then apply those principles to our lives.”<sup>14</sup> When individuals have no proper understanding of the context, then Scriptures are twisted to suit their perceptions. According to Gundry, individual ministers interpret the Scriptures to suit their own

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<sup>10</sup> Smith, *Beyond the Stained-Glass Ceiling*, 34.

<sup>11</sup> Gundry, *Woman Be Free*, 19.

<sup>12</sup> Gundry, *Woman Be Free*, 11.

<sup>13</sup> Smith, *Beyond the Stained-Glass Ceiling*, x.

<sup>14</sup> Gundry, *Woman Be Free*, 57.

ideas. She further states that “we take isolated portions of Scripture and try to prove an all-encompassing truth when we should first take an overview of the broad sweep of Scriptures, so we can better see God’s plan and our place in that plan.”<sup>15</sup>

There are different perspectives on how Scripture is interpreted. In some cases, it is used to offer freedom to women in ministry, while others apply literal interpretation to achieve their goal, which is to insist on restricting women. Gundry further points out that little digging has been done on the problem verses, and not wanting to stir up trouble, some individuals would rather not hold discussions about them. She is of the opinion that those problem verses should be examined since the lives and service of women in the body of Christ are regulated and bonded by these verses that deserve careful study and the results of that study should be made available to every woman in the church.<sup>16</sup> And I would add not just to females in the church, but to the general public, that everyone desiring knowledge would be able to locate information when needed.

The Creator’s intention can be found by examining the biblical perspective. Throughout the Bible women can be seen occupied in various capacities. As the debate goes on, I concur with Cowles that “our principal task, is to discover the ‘grand truth’ of the whole of Scripture in regard to male-female relationships in general and then what is the role of women in the church.”<sup>17</sup> There are some cases where individuals are unsure of how to sort out what is biblical from what is cultural. Also, earnest, Spirit-filled, Bible-believing Christians can have strong, differences of opinion about the Scriptures. But it must be borne in mind that “the Bible offers a coherent system of principles to guide those individuals and churches who are willing

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<sup>15</sup> Gundry, *Woman Be Free*, 36.

<sup>16</sup> Gundry, *Woman Be Free*, 58.

<sup>17</sup> Cowles, *A Woman’s Place?* Kindle loc. 403.

to listen.”<sup>18</sup> Where there is lack of careful biblical study, danger exists. “Effort should be made to understand the underlying intent of the Biblical text, so the true meaning of the text can be ascertained, which when it surface may force us to change.”<sup>19</sup> When people understand the meaning of the Scripture, then some of the stress on the women in ministry would definitely be minimized.

### **The Mission of the Church in the Midst of Prevailing Cultural Perspectives**

God loves his creation and desires that none perish but that all be reconciled to him. Jesus in his earthly ministry came to seek and save the lost. He built the church, which should have a balanced view about people created in the image and likeness of God the Creator.

The Christian church, of course did not spring up suddenly into a well-defined organization with buildings, officials, and large congregations. In its earliest stages, it is best understood as a social movement like any other. It was informal, often counter-cultural in tone, and was marked by fluidity and flexibility that allowed women, slaves, and artisans to assume leadership roles. Why, then, are we so unaware of the prominence of women in the birth of Christianity? Why does this powerful misperception continue to marginalize woman and even the more enlightened branches of contemporary Christianity?<sup>20</sup>

Just before leaving earth, Jesus gave the Great Commission to his followers: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20).” The mission is still being carried out by the church, and God by his Spirit places a call in the heart of believers to be bearers of the gospel of Jesus and

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<sup>18</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 13.

<sup>19</sup> Carroll Osburn, *Women in the Church: Reclaiming the Ideal* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2001), 47.

<sup>20</sup> Karen Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests: Woman’s Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of Their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 11.

to be involved in Christian ministry. The church in response sends out ministers to be shepherds of God's people.

Those who are sent must be realistic about the challenges ahead. It is important for those who do the sending to assist in the preparation process for those who are going and for those who will be on the receiving end. It is critical for the senders to teach those who are being sent that ministry is not for the faint of heart whether male or female . . . all pastors must possess at the core of their being an unshakable conviction that God and God alone has called them. Anyone who lacks that certainty should not be sent.<sup>21</sup>

It is unfortunate that in some places the church has placed many restrictions on women. Denominations vary in what they will allow women to do, while no restrictions are placed on men. Gundry asks, "What body can work to full potential if half its members are bound with ropes and blinders so that full motion and vision are impossible? The body which is the church has bound its women in this way. Is there not room in God's church for all the members of his body to use everything he has given them?"<sup>22</sup>

Nick Cuthbert is of the opinion that the "calling to be a leader in the church is one of the greatest privileges in the world and it is a wonderful way to spend your working life."<sup>23</sup> Based on her experience as a female in ministry, Hyacinth Boothe encourages all women answering the call to ministry in these critical years to do so in humility, offering the self as women, bringing to the Lord the gift of their femininity, cognizant of the fact that as women we are made in the image of God, according to the first creation narrative. It is God who made both male and female in his image. Consequently, "women are legitimate children of the living God, and the daughters of

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<sup>21</sup> Smith, *Beyond the Stained-Glass Ceiling*, 5.

<sup>22</sup> Gundry, *Woman Be Free*, 33.

<sup>23</sup> Nick Cuthbert, *How to Survive and Thrive as a Church Leader* (Oxford: Monarch Books, 2006), 9.

Judah may justifiably rejoice.”<sup>24</sup> She further claims that God is calling women and women should go to God, “not hiding behind masculine perceptions, masculine interpretations, masculine projections, but let us bring to God our feminine perceptions, interpretations and sensitivities. Let us bring to God our experience of what it means to be a woman.”<sup>25</sup>

### **Women in Male-Dominated Society**

It must be “acknowledged, at the outset, that the Scriptures were written in, and deeply reflective of a patriarchal culture; a ‘man’s world.’ In many places, men are accepted as being suitable for leadership but not women, and it is found that instead of a horizontal relationship of equality and mutuality, it forced them into a vertical relationship of master and slave.”<sup>26</sup> Old Testament Israel was a patriarchal society, in which the woman was always under the authority of a man. It was with the fall of man and distortion of relationships that patriarchalism, which is male supremacy, developed.

The main characters throughout the Bible are males.<sup>27</sup> In Judaism, which is foundational to the development of Christianity, there is the picture of women as being inferior to men. Women were not permitted to occupy public positions. The woman who stayed home and was obedient to her husband was regarded as the virtuous woman mentioned in Proverbs 30. Men were the ones in positions of authority in marriage, society, and government. In the Jewish family “women were

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<sup>24</sup> Hyacinth Boothe, “Women—Ministerial Formation and Ministry: A Caribbean Perspective,” *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies* 17, no. 1 (April 1996): 14.

<sup>25</sup> Boothe, “Women—Ministerial Formation and Ministry,” 15.

<sup>26</sup> Cowles, *A Woman’s Place?* Kindle loc. 925.

<sup>27</sup> Cowles, *A Woman’s Place?* Kindle loc. 415.

not required to fulfill most religious obligations apart from dietary and sexual laws and the lightning of the Shabbat candles.”<sup>28</sup>

For certain events the presence of men is required and viewed as divine presence. No number of women can make up the deficiency as a woman does not count, the opening part of the daily morning service contains the injunction: Men say ‘Blessed art thou O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast not made me a woman . . . In Orthodox and Conservative synagogue, men and women are strictly separated and female worshippers do not take any official part in the service.<sup>29</sup>

Spencer endorses the fact that based on Jewish culture and customs, women were primarily responsible for managing the home and family. It was unusual to find women who studied the Scriptures and were learned in Jewish teachings. They were not required to study the Torah, and no one was obligated to teach them.<sup>30</sup> They were not allowed to be engaged in public life for fear that they would become promiscuous; also they were not allowed to be in the company of men. Since they were not scholars, they were viewed as possessing limited edification, and men were not to enter into discussions with them.<sup>31</sup>

Osburn refers to patriarchalism as a “citadel of masculine authority in which gender roots were carefully set . . . women were excluded from male dominated spheres”<sup>32</sup> Then women were primarily mothers and housekeepers, and they were the ones for whom religion was important, but as years went by, male authority surfaced in the church. For many things, it is not clear how to sort out what is biblical from what is cultural since all views are affected by culture; they were not independent of the society within which they exist. Osburn further states that the issue of the role of

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<sup>28</sup> Barbara MacHaffie, *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2006), 1.

<sup>29</sup> Norman Anderson, ed., *The World’s Religion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 77.

<sup>30</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 47.

<sup>31</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 55-56.

<sup>32</sup> Osburn, *Women in the Church*, 5.

women in the church is not solely a religious one. It is deeply rooted in the patriarchal model from the past, as well as the culture in which women live. In the patriarchal culture, religion was seen as a useful tool, and even when it was obvious that women had talents for church work, men decided that women were not to exercise authority. Women were forbidden to preach or teach with men in the audience. Reference was made to Scripture passages such as 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15.<sup>33</sup>

Whether one likes it or not, changes are occurring regarding women and their role; the impact of those changes on churches as we have come to know them is significant. Fearing these changes, some individuals resolutely hold on to the patriarchal model inherited from past.<sup>34</sup> According to Kate Coleman, “Women are coming to leadership at precisely the time that the culture of leadership is experiencing some of its greatest changes . . . the essential but often missing aspects of leadership, namely women’s perspectives, are at least beginning to experience an awakening.”<sup>35</sup> Smith views it as a paradigm shift and further claims that “those who are trying to enter a door, or break through a barrier need assistance from those already on the other side . . . women seeking to gain entrance or additional access to ministry and the pastorate need male advocates.”<sup>36</sup> The different patriarchal positions seem to have been the breeding ground for problems to be developed which continue to disrupt women in ministry up to the present time. Men have developed the mindset that they are in charge, they are the leaders, and women should be in subjection to them; it is as if that came from the Creator.

In the Old Testament, leadership was predominantly male; however, several outstanding women were used by God to accomplish great things in that era. God

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<sup>33</sup> Osburn, *Women in the Church*, 8-9.

<sup>34</sup> Osburn, *Women in the Church*, 5.

<sup>35</sup> Kate Coleman, *7 Deadly Sins of Women in Leadership: Overcome Self-Defeating Behavior in Work and Ministry* (Birmingham, UK: Next Leadership, 2010), 32-33.

<sup>36</sup> Smith, *Beyond the Stained-Glass Ceiling*, 134.

used prophets to foretell, that is, to predict what would come in the future, and to forth-tell, that is, to preach or proclaim the divine message. Some female prophets “provided leadership, guidance, instruction and words of warning to men, women, and entire nations.”<sup>37</sup> Male leaders dominated the scene; they decided that women were not to exercise authority, and eventually no mention was made of the women. Even today some churches seem to be held in the patriarchal mode.

Smith points out that in different places, similar negative attitudes and responses of congregants to female ministers can be identified. Some churches with female ministers seem to be loving and respectful, so that one would have thought discrimination against women in ministry has ceased; however, the struggle is still on. People in some churches will readily vocalize that they do not want a female senior pastor. They may not be conscious of it, but there are men and women who have been socialized to think that women should not be in leadership. They would rather have an unqualified man than a super-qualified woman.<sup>38</sup>

The status of women in ministry is further complicated by other theories and competing theologies; some embrace equality between male and female, while others embrace their own interpretations of Pauline restrictions on the ministry of woman in the church. Some feminist advocates have total disregard for Christianity, others hate the male gender, and some argue for the superiority of women to men; but there are those whose message is simply connected to injustice shown to women by society and the church. Women have played significant roles in the church throughout history, but in many places, they have had to deal with the behavior of chauvinist men along with the failure of men to speak up in the debate about gender-based roles. “An avalanche of feminist literature has argued that there need to be no difference between men’s

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<sup>37</sup> Smith, *Beyond the Stained-Glass Ceiling*, 34.

<sup>38</sup> Smith, *Beyond the Stained-Glass Ceiling*, 21.

and women's roles—indeed, that to support gender-based role differences is unjust discrimination.”<sup>39</sup> F. William Ratliff points out that in the modern world there are too many competing worldviews:

Changing male and female roles in modern society are one example of this phenomenon. The organizational structures of many religions are decidedly paternalistic. The feminist movement reflects a sensitivity to social structures that limit women to secondary roles and incomplete fulfillment of potential. Feminist urge a reformation of such structures in order to provide an equality for women and if such reform is not possible, they often advocate rejection of traditional religion in favor of alternative religions.<sup>40</sup>

### **Other External Sources of Challenge to Women in Ministry**

Although women in ministry encounter many problems, God continues to give spiritual gifts to women as he desires. While some people are of the opinion that women should not be involved in Christian ministry and others are lobbying for restrictions to be put in place, particularly in leadership, the kingdom of God is advancing and women are involved. In years gone by, women were viewed as terribly lacking in skills and gifts, but changes have taken place and “there is now general agreement that women possess exactly the same spiritual gifts as men do and are to be encouraged to develop and exercise these gifts to their fullest potential. In effect, women are urged to be all that they can be spiritually.”<sup>41</sup> Cowles points out that the church is being immeasurably weakened when deprived of the potential contribution of God-called, gifted, and Spirit-filled women. Women have been kept in chains and forbidden because they are women, barred from exercising their spiritual gifts and talents for the edification of the church and the evangelization of the world.<sup>42</sup> Those who sought pastoral placements were allowed to plant new congregations or repair

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<sup>39</sup> John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), xiii.

<sup>40</sup> Donald Musser and Joseph Price, eds., *Handbook of Christian Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2003), 38.

<sup>41</sup> Belleville, “Women in Ministry,” 22.

<sup>42</sup> Cowles, *A Woman’s Place?* Kindle loc. 2693.

failing ones. As soon as the congregations got to the point of viability a new male pastor was chosen to replace the woman.

One wonders about the source from which the challenge comes. Smith states that

often the most vocal opponent or female pastors were not men but other women. Some women view female clergy as being “out of biblical order,” usurping authority of men in the church . . . In the minds of these individuals, the clergy woman’s assertion that God has called her to lead a congregation seems heretical. And those who operate under this assumption can be quite difficult (but not impossible) to convince otherwise.<sup>43</sup>

Gundry has also highlighted the negative perception when she states that “woman has been treated as man’s inferior so long, that this practice has become accepted as truth.”<sup>44</sup>

Families can also play a significant role in the lives of people who are in ministry, even if they seem to be dysfunctional or strange. Writing from a male perspective, Cuthbert states that ministry can be viewed as being whole-hearted for God, and while that is true, for those in ministry it can become an all-consuming obsession which is unhealthy; families suffer or are destroyed.<sup>45</sup> Coleman clearly states that God values and promotes the family. It is through family that he fulfills his purpose in sending salvation to the whole world. We should not neglect our family irrespective of how complex it becomes. She gives additional admonition to those in ministry.

Family relationships are certainly God given gifts even when they feel like mixed blessings, therefore, we should cherish them and avoid any tendency to neglect whatever family we have. However, family life should never be worshiped or elevated to a god-like status. While family is accorded great significance in the Bible it never competes with discipleship. Whatever the size or shape of our family, it has the potential to contribute something of great value to God’s purposes. Although our inner circle can test and

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<sup>43</sup> Smith, *Beyond the Stained-Glass Ceiling*, 37.

<sup>44</sup> Gundry, *Woman Be Free*, 17.

<sup>45</sup> Cuthbert, *How to Survive and Thrive as a Church Leader*, 63.

challenge our leadership capabilities, they can also enhance them. It is also true that our leadership gifts enable us to empower our family circle, thereby maximizing their potential.<sup>46</sup>

### **Jesus and Women**

Many people have pointed to Jesus as the one who has liberated women and caused them to be elevated to what God intended, and he brought about this insistence on equality of the sexes. Cowles asserts that for the Christian interpreter, the life, teachings, and example of Jesus are the ultimate criteria by which everything in the Bible is valued and judged. In contrast to the existing Jewish teachings and practices, Jesus changed what women could do and their priorities; he liberated women from the deep-rooted male domination which came because of the fall. By his example and teachings, he brought back God's original intention at creation, which was for women to participate fully in the public tasks of life. He encouraged women to seek religious teaching, and that was a challenge to the traditions which exempted a woman from learning the Torah. It was assumed that a woman's primary role was that of a homemaker.<sup>47</sup> Cultural traditions are not necessarily bad, but not all cultural practices advance the kingdom of God.

Several writers outline how Jesus went against the customs of his time and culture. He broke down gender and cultural barriers, causing women to know who they are and what they could do. "It is striking that Jesus did not treat women as women but as persons, he took women seriously, asked them questions, encouraged their potential and lifted them up to the dignity that they deserved."<sup>48</sup> Cowles states that "women have never had a greater champion, a mightier liberationist, than Jesus of Nazareth. In word and deed, Jesus struck the chains that had for so long bound

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<sup>46</sup> Coleman, *7 Deadly Sins of Women in Leadership*, 285.

<sup>47</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 133.

<sup>48</sup> Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1985), 548.

women in a demeaning state of depersonalized and dehumanized subordination and set them free to claim their inheritance as choice and chosen daughters of the most high God.”<sup>49</sup>

Mary and Martha were friends of Jesus (Luke 10:38-42). Spencer shows that Jesus had concern for Martha’s feelings but said Mary had made the right choice, for she selected the good share which would not be taken from her. Obviously, he did not think that women should be exempted from learning God’s law.<sup>50</sup> He allowed Mary to sit at his feet and listen to him teach. Jesus would challenge the teachings today which are restricting women from full participation in Christian service for the same reasons the rabbis employed in the first century. Jesus wanted woman redeemed from the curse to learn so that they too would be ready to testify as apostles at the resurrection.<sup>51</sup>

Jesus called both men and women to follow him in discipleship and . . . he expended himself to teach them and involve them in his service without regard for sexual differences. . . . Jesus took special precautions to make sure that the younger women . . . realized that they were included in his call to become disciples . . . taking an active part in the religious life and institutions of contemporaneous Judaism.<sup>52</sup>

In John 4, Jesus spoke directly with the Samaritan woman showing concern for her spiritual condition, although in the culture, the Jews and the Samaritans had no dealing. When the discourse ended she could probably be described as the first female evangelist. Gundry shows Jesus as our only human-divine glimpse of what God is like, and he never treated woman as inferiors. Instead he shocked his disciples with his unconventional treatment of women.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Cowles, *A Woman’s Place?* Kindle loc. 1204.

<sup>50</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 60.

<sup>51</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 134.

<sup>52</sup> Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says about a Woman’s Place in Church and Family* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 93.

<sup>53</sup> Gundry, *Woman Be Free*, 20.

Jesus liberated women from male domination and Jewish teachings and practices. He showed God's original intention for women to be involved in public life, and Spencer is of the opinion that if he was still on earth today, he would challenge the teachings which are restricting women from full participation in Christian ministry. She further stated that "Jesus wanted women redeemed from the curse to learn so that they too would be ready to testify as apostles at the resurrection. Jesus also spoke with women in public so that the fear of unchastity would never limit education nor genuine communication."<sup>54</sup>

Although in the first-century Jewish culture women were not allowed to be witnesses, yet God chose the women to be witnesses of the resurrection. They were the first at the tomb; among them was Mary Magdalene. They found the tomb empty, then informed Peter and the other apostles that Jesus was risen from the dead (Matthew 28:1-10). After the death of Jesus, it is believed that women continued to play a prominent role in Christianity.

Among the reasons given for restrictions is the fact that Jesus had twelve male disciples, but as stated by Cowles, "such an argument invites the response: Jesus chose twelve apostles and not one of them was a Gentile either."<sup>55</sup> Although in some churches women are now being ordained to the Christian ministry, it is still difficult or impossible for women to be treated as equal with male colleagues.

We must ask; was it Jesus' intention, in selecting only male apostles, to thereby exclude women from publicly proclaiming the gospel, or were there some practical social realities that dictated such a limitation? Can we find clear support in the life and teachings of Jesus for dividing the body of Christ along gender lines? Was it his purpose for his body to institutionalize discrimination against women? Does this state of affairs in today's church bring him glory?<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 134.

<sup>55</sup> Cowles, *A Woman's Place?* Kindle loc. 422.

<sup>56</sup> Cowles, *A Woman's Place?* Kindle loc. 376.

I concur with those writers who claim that women never had a greater champion, a mightier liberationist, than Jesus of Nazareth. Cowles further endorses that idea by saying,

Thanks to the seeds of liberation planted by Jesus and cultivated by Paul . . . women are increasingly enjoying the mature fruit of emancipation from gender discrimination and now enjoy an acceptance and freedom of movement never before known. Women today are as well educated as men. They have access to the best in biblical and theological training. They not only accepted on an equal par with men in most public forums . . . There is, therefore, no longer any justification for binding women under ancient cultural constraints that no longer apply.<sup>57</sup>

### **Paul's Teachings about Women**

All Christians redeemed by Jesus have the same status. Paul writes about the new creation in Christ: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ" (Galatians 3:28). In his teachings and practice Paul was seen as challenging the foundation of his Jewish traditions by showing that because of the Messiah, both male and female were jointly heirs over the earth under the direction of God. Apart from Jesus, women never had a more ardent advocate than Paul, although he was in a society that treated women as subhuman.<sup>58</sup>

When Paul said that women should learn in silence, he was asking them to show respect and affirm their teacher's convictions.<sup>59</sup> He was instructing women to learn so that they would have full knowledge of God's truth and that equipping would make their leadership possible. Women were not to teach until they were well instructed, to ensure that they would not use authority in a destructive manner.<sup>60</sup> The popular opinion is that Paul was saying that women should not occupy positions of leadership in the Christian ministry. In societies and denominations where women are restricted

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<sup>57</sup> Cowles, *A Woman's Place?* Kindle loc. 1249.

<sup>58</sup> Cowles, *A Woman's Place?* Kindle loc. 1267.

<sup>59</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 77.

<sup>60</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 133.

partially or completely Paul's writing is quoted, without concern for context and background.

Paul's own affirmation of women in leadership positions shows that his restriction of women at Ephesus had to be limited. The New Testament testifies to women been given gifts from God for authoritative positions. Women were apostles, prophets, teachers, coworkers, ministers, and church overseers. Paul affirms Junia, Priscilla, and Phoebe. Phoebe and Priscilla are clearly teaching and leading men. The Bible also records the leadership roles of Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, Mary, Salome, Anna, Miriam, Huldah, Deborah, Phillip's four daughters, Lydia, Chloe, the elect lady, and her elect sister. A multitude of women testify to God's call to woman to lead the church.<sup>61</sup>

### **The Holy Spirit at Work in the Lives of Women**

God liberates male and female and gives his Spirit on the basis of faith and obedience. The necessity of engaging in the proclamation of the gospel is laid on both female and male, particularly those who devote themselves to Christian ministry. There will always be challenges of one kind or another; however, it is necessary for female ministers to keep in mind that they are first and foremost ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ and share in the apostolic task of going into all the world to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ as stated in Luke 4:18: "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me for he has anointed me." It is "the empowering hand of the Holy Spirit that is resting on us, this is where we ought to latch on to as women ministers."<sup>62</sup> The Holy Spirit knows no gender, he works in and through any available vessel.

Joel gave the prophetic word from the Lord: "and afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women. I will pour out my Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:28). The fulfilment of Joel's prophecy took place on the day of Pentecost in the Upper Room as the Holy Spirit

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<sup>61</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 135.

<sup>62</sup> Boothe, "Women—Ministerial Formation and Ministry," 19.

was being poured out, and women were numbered among those who were filled with the Spirit and spoke in tongues (Acts 1:14, 15; 2:1-4).

The Pentecostal movement emerged from the Holiness movement. In 1901, under the leadership of Charles Fox Parham, a woman named Agnes Ozman was reported as the first person to speak in tongues, and later Parham organized his Bible school in Kansas to “fit men and women” to go to the ends of the earth to preach; both genders were selected then.<sup>63</sup> In the early Pentecostal church both men and women were ordained and commissioned to ministry. Several of the missionaries who went out from Azusa Street with the Pentecostal message were females.

Historically, women were prohibited from leadership not only in the church but also in most of the areas of society. Throughout the last half of the 20th century, however, women’s roles have changed dramatically. Women lead some of the nation’s most successful corporations, and had some of the most prestigious academic institutions in the country and the world . . . Yet one of the most challenging issues facing the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement in the 21st-century concerns the role of woman in the ministry and leadership of the church.<sup>64</sup>

Early Pentecostals were of the opinion that those who experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit were empowered to do ministry as directed by the Holy Spirit. They believed that God was not concerned about social status, education, or other formal preparation; all was well if they were supernaturally anointed. There was no formal ecclesiastical system of selection; good candidates for ministry were those individuals who claimed to have a call from God and were able to demonstrate the fruit of a Spirit-empowered ministry.<sup>65</sup> Consequently, gender was not an issue. In some individuals there was the settled conviction that it was the dispensation of the

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<sup>63</sup> Estrelda Alexander and Amos Yong, *Philip’s Daughters: Women in Pentecostal-Charismatic Leadership*, Princeton Theological Monograph 104 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 4.

<sup>64</sup> Alexander and Yong, *Philip’s Daughters*, 2.

<sup>65</sup> Alexander and Yong, *Philip’s Daughters*, 3-4.

Holy Spirit and women filled with the Holy Spirit were also empowered to declare the unsearchable riches of Christ.

It seems to be a common feature that in the earliest years, there appeared to be almost absolute freedom for women to pursue whatever course they felt God was leading them to follow . . . as the movement grew and attempted to gain respectability, women's roles were curtailed by a number of formal and informal restrictions in most Pentecostal bodies. Women still had freedom to preach and exhort, but governing roles became more limited and these bodies grew to more closely reflect the gender-stratified hierarchy they once denounced in mainline bodies.<sup>66</sup>

Because Pentecostal eschatology was linked with the return of Christ, so many church leaders then felt an urgent need to involve everyone in the task of winning as many souls as possible into the kingdom. And it is at that time that many women were recruited to preach the gospel.<sup>67</sup> In Holiness, Pentecostal, or even evangelical circles sometimes the fact is ignored that men and women begin a life-changing and challenging journey when they embrace God's call to serve as ordained clergy. Approval and affirmation are sometimes not given because it is seen as carnal or worldly to desire such. Christians who claim to have a call from God are expected to deny self, working tirelessly without honor on earth. Ultimate reward will be received in heaven. Some people consider that "it is preposterous to think such a life can be well lived and such a calling faithfully discharged in the absence of affirmation, support and continuing care given the nature of the pressures of ministry."<sup>68</sup>

Gundry identifies the Holy Spirit as the greatest gift of all, whose presence within leads, comforts, and illuminates the Bible for each believer.<sup>69</sup> She further points out that at Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out on both men and women alike. Women were shown as co-receivers of spiritual gifts. Pentecostalism created a new

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<sup>66</sup> Alexander and Yong, *Philip's Daughters*, 3.

<sup>67</sup> Alexander and Yong, *Philip's Daughters*, 3.

<sup>68</sup> Alexander and Bowers, *What Women Want*, 70-71.

<sup>69</sup> Gundry, *Woman Be Free*, 24.

religious culture, but it did not readily remove all the biases and women leaders were not all free to flow with the leading of the Holy Spirit. Gradually, as time went by and there was less emphasis on the premillennial hope of the return of Jesus, women in ministry were not regarded as being essential as in former years. Also, several changes were made in the Pentecostal movement that included restrictions on the ministry and leadership of women, and eventually there was the gradual decline of opportunities for women to be in leadership of the church.<sup>70</sup>

Eventually, Pentecostal churches became more and more organized, and there was also a “growing professionalism of the ministry . . . characterized by differing criteria for credentialing men and women for ministry, hierarchical ranks of ministry, dual tracks for women and men seeking to pursue God’s call to ministry in their lives, and the shift of ministry from a primarily voluntary vocation to a paid occupation—at least for men.”<sup>71</sup> Many things were taking place that resulted in problems for women in ministry.

Women in the Christian church had different experiences and various status, since some denominations were still resistant to female inclusion in ministry while others allowed women to be included, to the point where no distinction was made between men and women. In the Pentecostal church women were in the majority, promoting the significant growth that was taking place within the church. Many scholars have come to realize that Azusa Street was not the one origin of modern Pentecostalism but it was God speaking to and through people all over the globe, including Jamaica. As time went by, in some places there were increased restrictions for women; however, many persisted in entering the ministry in large numbers and sought leadership roles during those early years. In other places there was the decline

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<sup>70</sup> Alexander and Yong, *Philip’s Daughters*, 6.

<sup>71</sup> Alexander and Yong, *Philip’s Daughters*, 7.

of the actual numbers of women who answered the call and pursued public ministry and leadership or attempted to move beyond the limited roles prescribed to them.<sup>72</sup>

It is undeniable that Pentecostalism has created a new religious culture. Not all the biases are removed, but in some places, women are flowing in the power of the Holy Spirit and are helping to advance the cause of Christ. Negative things that stand against the cause of Christ can be identified in every culture, Boothe mentions the self- interest, greed, covetousness, desire for more and more money, and the lust for power and competitive mentality that exists in the Jamaican culture and undoubtedly will affect even Christians.<sup>73</sup>

Those with a negative attitude to women in ministry may cause female pastors to suffer lack if they choose to not be good stewards. Smith endorses the point by stating that “one of the greatest challenges that many female pastors face is the lack of financial resources. Some people may argue that money is not a major issue or factor. However, it cannot be underestimated. Women must break free from the habit of denying the need for financial support. Women in ministry have publicly decried the need for funding but privately expressed their financial struggles.”<sup>74</sup> Smith also describes the challenges of some female pastors; desiring to keep the ministry afloat, they are forced to use their own resources to pay for repairs, buy supplies, and provide funding for special events and programs. In some cases, the pay is low; they struggle to pay for family needs or children in college so they become bi-vocational or secure additional employment. In addition to ministry, so much time and energy is spent trying to make ends meet.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Alexander and Yong, *Philip's Daughters*, 7.

<sup>73</sup> Boothe, “Women—Ministerial Formation and Ministry,” 21.

<sup>74</sup> Smith, *Beyond the Stained-Glass Ceiling*, 127-128.

<sup>75</sup> Smith, *Beyond the Stained-Glass Ceiling*, 129-130.

Further predicaments arise for some female pastors when some churches make the choice to pay a female pastor less than they would pay a male pastor, or if they choose to pay all bills instead of salary.

With her faith challenged, her vision blurred, her motivation drained, her wonderful ideas tabled, she fights against despondency. She presses on, desperately seeking resources while praying her way through. She is still preacher, teacher, and encourager in chief. She still called to the bedside of the sick, sought after by troubled souls needing a word of counsel or inspiration, asked to attend the juvenile court hearing, and expected to tell the lost about salvation. Her mind tells her, “girl, you are crazy!” The bill collector tells her, “that partial payment you made is not sufficient.” Her heart tells her, “you are a Pastor—trust God!”<sup>76</sup>

Coleman in *7 Deadly Sins of Women in Leadership* acknowledges that there are still many male-dominated occupations and women have to work twice as hard as men to be considered half as good. Those in leadership, unlike men, are forced to deal with many negative factors. She highlights the fact that the progress of women in ministry is affected not only by external factors, but also there are other disturbing factors that will not change even if there are changes in equality regulation or improved working conditions. She shows that women are more susceptible to negative practices, emotional repercussion, spiritual attack, resistance and even friendly fire. Sometimes those women in ministry as leaders experience burnout, are running on empty, or are overtaxed by carrying the burden of caring for family.<sup>77</sup> Coleman further postulates that, “deadly sins are essentially self-defeating, undesirable and ultimately destructive behavior patterns that undermine leadership potential and our relationship with God.”<sup>78</sup>

The challenges of women in ministry cannot be thoroughly discussed just by looking at the external sources of challenges. As mentioned by Coleman, women in

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<sup>76</sup> Smith, *Beyond the Stained-Glass Ceiling*, 129.

<sup>77</sup> Coleman, *7 Deadly Sins of Women in Leadership*, 30-31

<sup>78</sup> Coleman, *7 Deadly Sins of Women in Leadership*, 32-33.

ministry are not only affected by external factors. Of the seven deadly sins of women in leadership the first that she mentions is “Limiting Self Perceptions—Adjust how you see yourself.” There can be toxic, inward struggles based on self-perceptions which involve our belief, how we get an understanding of who we are. It is embedded in several factors, such as the messages we get from society, our friends, family, and colleagues, as well as our understanding of God’s perspective and acceptance of us. It is possible that we do not validate or appreciate who we are; we have doubts, anxieties, lack confidence, have low self-esteem, and are unsure about our competence as leaders.<sup>79</sup>

Even the most confident appearing women can struggle with a sense of low self-esteem . . . She is a called woman leader who is clearly called of God, but who inwardly struggles with questions of self-doubt, personal shame, and quietly wonders whether God’s delight in her is really true . . . Women leaders, again because of the many layers of a woman’s life, need to address their inner anxiety before they can freely move to the next level . . . Women can have an internal tornado, full of questions and unfinished business: Am I okay? Am I really competent? What about being single? Are my kids doing well? Does my husband find delight in me? Am I doing life right?<sup>80</sup>

Of significance too, are the attitudes and expectations of those among whom and to whom ministry is done.

### **Women in the Church of God of Prophecy**

In the Church of God of Prophecy, from early in the twentieth century a few women were included in the church’s ministry although their roles and functions were somewhat limited. In the early twentieth century, A. J. Tomlinson stated that “both men and women, young and old should endeavor to undertake great things for God

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<sup>79</sup> Coleman, *7 Deadly Sins of Women in Leadership*, 46-47.

<sup>80</sup> Rosie Ward, *Growing Women Leaders: Nurturing Women’s Leadership in the Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, Bible Reading Fellowship, 2008), 172.

and expect great things from God.”<sup>81</sup> Tomlinson signed and issued ministerial credentials for men and women to perform ministerial functions.

Female licensed evangelists and lay ministers could preach, teach, and publish the gospel, but they were not allowed to baptize converts or receive them as members of the church. Some churches had female pastors, but they could not conduct the “Business Conference since that was viewed as part of the male pastor’s responsibility. Women were not allowed to participate in business decisions of the church neither at the local, district, regional, or international level. This happened due to the misapplication of first Corinthians 14:34-35.”<sup>82</sup>

The good news is that God is not bound by our traditions, -isms, or bad theology. The challenge, however, is cultivating an atmosphere, an environment, a new way of seeing God’s hand and movement through and among whoever God chooses. Cultivating in the field or the venues to which female pastors shall go is as important as preparing the pastors themselves... In order to develop best practices or strategies for moving ahead, it is imperative to understand the background, current trends, and barriers that persist . . . It is necessary to understand historical trends. It is important to examine the rugged road over which female clergy have travelled on the way to the pastorate.<sup>83</sup>

## Conclusion

God is still calling women, filling them with the Holy Spirit and arousing in them the desire to advance his kingdom. In some parts of the world there are anointed women who are empowered and determined to work in the church and the wider mission field. It is unfortunate that in some places today, the church still has restrictions for women in ministry. In many churches “women are excluded from the higher ranks of credentialed ministry, and, inadvertently, the models of leadership ... contribute to the construction of gender identity and models of leadership which are

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<sup>81</sup> A. J. Tomlinson. *The Last Great Conflict* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing, 1913), vii.

<sup>82</sup> Tomlinson, *The Last Great Conflict*, v.

<sup>83</sup> Smith, *Beyond the Stained-Glass Ceiling*, 6.

contradictory to the liberation of women into their prophetic roles in kingdom work.”<sup>84</sup> As Gundry asked, “What body can work to full potential if half its members are bound with ropes and blinders so that full motion and vision are impossible? The body which is the church has bound its women in this way. Is there not room in God’s church for all the members of his body to use everything he has given them?”<sup>85</sup> “Despite women’s confidence in their call, abilities and their experience, there is no doubt they have been negatively affected emotionally and economically by the limitations imposed on them by the attitudes of male ministers, the lack of denominational support...to woman as pastors in congregations.”<sup>86</sup>

Pentecostalism opened a gateway for the female gender; many women are now free to respond to the call of God on their lives. However, there are still some denominations where women are required to be silent in the church and others where women desire but are not allowed to enter Christian ministry and leadership. With the move of the Spirit in the Pentecostal and charismatic churches, greater opportunities are created for female clergy to enter the pastorate, but it is a “matter not only of changing minds but also of transforming attitudes and ultimately hearts. True transformation can be costly. Individuals who are serious about advocating and strategizing to increase the likelihood that more woman will be considered for lead pastorates must be prepared for resistance.”<sup>87</sup>

In several places, although women have experienced ministerial subordination and suppression, many continue to give selfless and effective service to God and his kingdom. They claim that they are able to keep going because of the call from God;

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<sup>84</sup> Elaine Storkey, “Women in Leadership,” in *Challenges of Black Pentecostal Leadership in the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Phyllis Thompson (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2013), 4.

<sup>85</sup> Gundry, *Woman Be Free*, 33.

<sup>86</sup> Alexander and Bowers. *What Women Want*, 128.

<sup>87</sup> Smith, *Beyond the Stained-Glass Ceiling*, 159.

they have no plans to stop.<sup>88</sup> They continue to serve faithfully and at great personal sacrifice, particularly those who are evangelists, church planters and pastors. Spencer makes it clear that people, “especially men would be wise to encourage and affirm women as church leaders . . . the Bible should be our authority for action, not our desires or experiences.”<sup>89</sup> To overcome barriers and ensure a bright future for the church, “clergy woman must find ways to encourage, lift, and support one another with prayer, resources, helpful hints, and words of caution and affirmation.”<sup>90</sup> It is also necessary for male and female to work together for the advancing of the kingdom of God. According to Alice Matthews, when male and female work together they form a “God-blessed team,”<sup>91</sup> and Carolyn Curtis James calls this the “Blessed Alliance.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Alexander and Bowers. *What Women Want*, 142.

<sup>89</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 14.

<sup>90</sup> Smith, *Beyond the Stained-Glass Ceiling*, 83.

<sup>91</sup> Alice Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 227.

<sup>92</sup> Carolyn Curtis James, *Half the Church: Recapturing God’s Global Vision for Women*. (Grand Rapids, MI: 2011), 135.

## CHAPTER THREE

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

#### Introduction

God the Creator has his plan and purpose for life on earth written in his Word. “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Alice Matthews points out that the Bible is our final authority, but sometimes the verses are twisted in odd ways.<sup>1</sup> Christian ministry is all about obeying God’s message for the building up of his kingdom. There are various issues with which we contend; people choose to embrace different perspectives, and various interpretations of the Bible are used to justify the position taken. Should women be involved in Christian ministry? How can the existing tension between men and women in ministry be resolved? Of significance is the Word of God rightly divided.

There is a direct link between how we choose to read and interpret the Christian Bible and, ultimately our view of God . . . we are challenged to think specifically and generally about who sets the agenda, what agenda is being set, and where we should look for endorsement for our position on women in leadership . . . hermeneutics gleaned from personal emotion, psychology, culture and politics could well lead us astray. The key question for us . . . is not whether the Church must catch up on the progress made for women in the rest of our culture, but what biblical theology has to say about leadership in the Church and society. Is the leadership of women endorsed by faithful Christian exegesis and is the opening up of higher offices in the Church to women compatible with the word of God? A candid reading of Scripture may lead us away from the question of whether women should be engaged in leadership to ask instead, “What kind of woman should be encouraged into Christian leadership?”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alice Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 18.

<sup>2</sup> Elaine Storkey, “Women in Leadership,” in *Challenges of Black Pentecostal Leadership in the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Phyllis Thompson (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2013), 23.

In order for the interpretation of any biblical text to be valid, it must be consistent with the historical-cultural and social context of that passage. One has to ascertain the author's intent in the book, passage, and sentence. Also, one has to recognize the meaning of the text for the original audience. When God's will is discovered there will also be the need to faithfully obey the principles in spite of different cultural situations.<sup>3</sup>

What God requires for the salvation and well-being of people is clearly stated, but there are some portions of Scripture that may not be clear to us today. Patricia Gundry asks,

should we disregard these passages and say they do not apply to us? No. But we should interpret them wisely and not separate them from their context to prove our biases or misconceptions. Nor should we ignore the rest of Scripture to make them mean something they do not. We must study these verses carefully and try to understand what God was trying to teach those Christians; we must use the principle illustrated even if the specific instruction is not transcultural. Christian principles are changeless, but the manner in which those principles are applied must change as customs change. By ignoring cultural factors, we have often denied many of those principles by insisting on a rigid, literal, transcultural application of these passages.<sup>4</sup>

In the discussion about the involvement of women in Christian ministry, much can be gleaned by looking at the basics of Christian ministry, the inclusion of women in ministry both in the Old and New Testament, close examination of how Jesus related to women, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the writings of the apostle Paul concerning women.

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<sup>3</sup> Kathy Keller, *Jesus, Justice, and Gender Roles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), Kindle loc. 95.

<sup>4</sup> Patricia Gundry, *Woman Be Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1979), 84.

## Basics of Christian Ministry

The creation narrative in Genesis shows that in the beginning, “God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them: male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). According to Carolyn James, “when God created human beings in his image and likeness, he was designing us as his representatives on the earth. Instead of running things directly himself, he chose us as his intermediaries to run things here in this world.”<sup>5</sup> God gave woman as an appropriate helper, a partner who would serve alongside the man. The woman and the man had common identity, they were bone and flesh and God made no distinction; both were entrusted with responsibility for creation. Aida Spencer emphatically asserts that women “were created to rule the earth, to till and guard the garden jointly, with the men as their friends and equals.”<sup>6</sup> Patriarchal system is not endorsed in the Bible.<sup>7</sup>

The first pair of people, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God, resulting in sin and separation from God. “We lost sight of God’s grand vision in the fall.”<sup>8</sup> All the offspring of Adam and Eve have missed the standard that God the creator established for his creation. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:23-24). God demonstrates his love for the world by sending Jesus to die on the cross for the sins of everyone. Those who believe will not perish but will have everlasting life (John 3:16). Jesus has built the church, and various individuals are gifted and given responsibility to care for the people of God and to equip them for works of service.

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<sup>5</sup> Carolyn Curtis James, *Half the Church: Recapturing God’s Global Vision for Women*. (Grand Rapids, MI: 2011), 53.

<sup>6</sup> Aida Besançon Spencer, *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1985), 28.

<sup>7</sup> Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 33.

<sup>8</sup> James, *Half the Church*, 51.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news that the world needs; it is essential to the life of young and old, male and female, and every ethnic group in every part of the world. Those who believe the Word of God and accept Jesus as Savior are translated and become members of the body of Christ. Also, they become a new type of community which is made up of people who are all sinners saved by grace. “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God was making his appeal through us” (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

### **Ministering Women in the Old Testament Era**

In the Old Testament God is shown dealing with the people of Israel; in that cultural context the main leaders were men, with a few females alongside them. Examination of some passages in the Bible reveals that there were some outstanding women who were involved in the work of God during the period of the Old Covenant. As time went by in different places, gender barriers were erected and several restrictions established, forbidding women from being involved in Christian ministry. Why should it be considered unbiblical or illegitimate for contemporary women to be involved in Christian ministry? God is unchanging; he remains the same in the time of the Old and New Covenant. It is important to ascertain and as much as possible comprehend what is stated in the Scriptures about women and their roles in the kingdom of God. It is God’s choice and instructions that really matter.

Prophets are individuals “raised up and equipped by God to communicate his plan and purposes to his people and to the world at large.”<sup>9</sup> There was no distinction between the office and ministry of a male or female prophet; women also occupied the position of prophet. In the book of Judges, the woman Deborah is shown as one chosen by God, and she functioned as an outstanding prophetess; she was also a judge of Israel:

As a judge, she was appointed by God to rule the government, direct the army, and judge legal matters. She reigned for forty years, in the spiritual and political role. It would seem that Deborah was a woman who loved God and was a willingly servant, God choose to use her then; directed by the Spirit of God, Deborah was so impressive as a military strategist and a prophetess that Barak the military commander refused to combat Sisera without her.<sup>10</sup>

How ministry was viewed then and how it is viewed now varies from one place to another. For women, often ministry was not just about being given titles or appointed to specific positions and assigned specific tasks. Whenever there was a task to be done God selected whomever he wanted to use, wherever, to do what he wanted done.

Huldah also had the gift of a prophet. She ministered during the reign of young king Josiah (2 Kings 22:8-20). During the repair of the temple, the Book of the Law was found. Josiah was quite concerned and sent some of his officials to Huldah the prophetess: “go and inquire of the Lord for me and for the people and for all Judah . . . She said to them, ‘this is what the Lord, the God of Israel says: tell the man who sent you to me. . .’” (2 Kings 22:13, 15; 2 Chronicles 34:21, 23). “Not only does she speak a word of judgement against Israel, she also brought a word of affirmation and redemption to Josiah. Huldah’s authority came through the Spirit as she replied to her

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<sup>9</sup> Stephen Renn, ed., *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 764.

<sup>10</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 103.

inquirers.”<sup>11</sup> Some people would have been puzzled over the decision to consult with a woman and not a man. “Though godly male prophets were in the vicinity, God had given a spiritual gift to the woman Huldah and then used her to speak his message to the high priest and to the King.”<sup>12</sup>

In the book of Esther, Esther, a simple, beautiful, Jewish girl reared by her cousin Mordecai was selected by King Ahasuerus to become queen after Queen Vashti was removed. Mordecai offended Haman, one of the high court officials, and that resulted in a decree that ordered the death of all the Jewish people in the Persian Empire. Esther was the only Jew who had direct access to the king when summoned; she became the individual used to play a significant role in God’s plan for salvation and deliverance of the Jewish people. Her Jewish identity was hidden, and obviously gender was not an issue. Mordecai told her,

if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this? Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish. (Esther 4:14-16)

She accepted the responsibility, made direct contact to God through prayer and fasting, and willingly exhibited courage in approaching the king when she was not invited. The king granted her request, the antagonist Haman was killed, and the Jewish people experienced deliverance. It was a female who led the request for God’s intervention, and the lives of the Jewish people were saved.

In the time of the Old Covenant, women leaders were few and far apart, but Joel the prophet gave a prophetic word of future gender inclusion: “And afterward, I

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<sup>11</sup> Estrelda Alexander and Amos Yong, *Phillip’s Daughters: Women in Pentecostal–Carismatic Leadership*, Princeton Theological Monograph 104 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 165.

<sup>12</sup> Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 64.

will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:28-29). It is repeated that women would be included among those on whom the Spirit would be poured: "sons and daughters," "men and women." "Whatever degree of spiritual experience one may have known in the Old Testament, chosen persons were enabled by the Spirit to do God's work . . . the necessary component for service was the power of God's personal enablement. His work cannot be done in the energy of the flesh. Only as human resources are under his control can his work be done."<sup>13</sup> It is "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts" (Zechariah 4:6-8).

### **Ministering Women in the New Testament Era**

"God always seeks communion with his people, but the Old Testament does not develop the Spirit's work through indwelling believers. That inward transformational power will come into prominence after the atoning work of the Messiah is completed and the era of a new covenant begins."<sup>14</sup> Examination of Scriptures reveals that the program of God on earth over the years has not been the prerogative of any one gender. Neither has there always been the involvement of necessarily many individuals. God has allowed that "down through the ages women have played a critical role in paving the course for the birth and the continued growth of the church. Sometimes women have served in formal or official leadership roles, and at other times they served in informal leadership roles. In either case, women have helped to shape and influence the church."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Coleman, *The Heart of the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 129-31.

<sup>14</sup> Coleman, *Heart of the Gospel*, 129.

<sup>15</sup> Jeanne Porter, *Leading Lessons: Insights on Leadership from Women of the Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 98.

The argument regarding the number of women in ministry cannot rest on the perspective of only those small numbers of Christian groups that acknowledge and make use of females with Spirit gifts. Spencer posits that “if even one woman could be found who was affirmed as an apostle, a prophet, an evangelist, a pastor, or a teacher, then one could, one must conclude that women have been given gifts from God for positions to which we now ordain people and for positions considered authoritative in the first century church.”<sup>16</sup> For the fulfillment of God’s plan, the Holy Spirit has been at work in different ways. In the Old and New Testaments, women in different ways played significant roles in the work of God. Several women worked behind the scenes and only the names of few are mentioned.

God, working by the Holy Spirit, used the Virgin Mary to bear a Son. Her cousin Elizabeth said, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb” (Luke 1:42). In the Magnificat, Mary exclaimed about the blessings that God had bestowed upon her that from that time onward all generations would call her blessed (Luke 1:46-48). Her Son, named Jesus, was the Son of God who would save people from their sins; also, he was called Immanuel—God with us. In every era, God selects who he desires to use for the advancement of his cause, male or female. Anna the prophetess was present at Jesus’ dedication. “She gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38). In Acts 21:9 mention is made of Philip, the evangelist, who had four daughters who prophesied.

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<sup>16</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 99-100 (in synecdoche, a part represents the whole).

## Jesus and Women

While on earth Jesus began his public ministry by declaring, “the Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19). In the Scripture, it is clearly stated that Jesus came to do the will of the Father, and his family is comprised of whoever does God’s will; those committed to the will of God are Jesus’ brother, sister, and mother (Mark 14:8-9). Throughout the Gospels, Jesus during his time on earth is shown honoring women and going against cultural stereotypes or expectations. Jesus overturned the gender-based hierarchy that dominated life in Israel.<sup>17</sup> He “models something in his whole relationship with women that remains a powerful challenge to us in our churches today.”<sup>18</sup> Jesus gave freedom and affirmation to women by his words and actions. He treated them with respect as people and as full disciples. In a culture that tended to regard women as little more than children, this is a significant step by itself. Luke has several accounts that highlight the value of women to the cause of Jesus. Today the gender battle is often fought in a different way, as opportunities open up for women that were unthinkable in the first century. Men and women are almost at war. This is most unfortunate, for Jesus foresaw a time when men and women would both contribute to the cause of Christ, working together rather than fighting for power.<sup>19</sup>

One incident of special interest, recorded in John 4, shows Jesus at the well conversing frankly with the Samaritan woman, breaking social and religious prohibitions. No relationship existed between Jews and Samaritans, but Jesus crossed over the barriers and eventually gave her the promise of living water. He was obviously on a mission to help this woman who initially had several past relational

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<sup>17</sup> Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 70.

<sup>18</sup> Storkey, “Women in Leadership,” 88.

<sup>19</sup> Darrell Bock, *Luke*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI Zondervan, 1996), 305.

failures but, in the end, could be regarded as a powerful woman in ministry to both male and female. They had a theological discussion about water and the place of worship; Jesus told an important truth, and it had nothing to do with gender: “God is Spirit and his worshippers must worship in the Spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). The disciples, reflecting the biases of the times, were surprised that Jesus was speaking with a Samaritan woman. “If in his dealings with the Samaritan woman Jesus was performing his Father’s will, there was greater sustenance and satisfaction in that than in any food the disciples could offer him.”<sup>20</sup>

After meeting with Jesus, the woman went back to the town and told the people to “come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah? They came out of the town and made their way toward him . . . Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, He told me everything I ever did” (John 4:29-30). It is evident that through the witness of a female, significant life transformation can take place in others. This was a woman with triple disqualifications for the function of an evangelist; she was a foreigner, and then women’s testimony was not considered valid in Jewish courts, plus there were moral and social questions about her. However, she became a witness with a powerful testimony which was quite an evangelistic force.<sup>21</sup> Jeanne Porter refers to her as a *well woman* “who could defy stereotypes, and her past, to walk in her calling. The people of the town flocked to Jesus because of the woman’s words . . . John likened the people’s eagerness to wheat that is ripe for harvest . . . The woman of Samaria had been empowered to lead.”<sup>22</sup> D. A. Carson refers to this ministry to Samaritans as the

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<sup>20</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar Commentary (London: Apollos, 1991), 228.

<sup>21</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God’s People: A Biblical Theology of the Church’s Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 176-77.

<sup>22</sup> Porter, *Leading Lessons*, 50.

first cross-cultural evangelism,<sup>23</sup> which was a pattern that would be followed by the church, bearing in mind what Jesus said in Acts 1:8: “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” This also endorses the fact that women too can be involved in being witnesses all over the earth.

In Luke 10:38-42 Jesus is shown in the company of his friends Mary and Martha. Tension developed as Martha expressed her displeasure at not being assisted by her sister. Instead of helping Martha, Mary chose to sit at Jesus’ feet, to learn from the rabbi. Although it was unusual for rabbis to have women as students, Jesus allowed Mary to learn from him and told Martha, “Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:42). Darrell Bock showed how Jesus raised to prominence a silent, devoted woman sitting at his feet, representing a good choice.

The fact that a woman can be portrayed in such a positive light, as one worthy to sit at the Master’s feet, is also significant in a first century culture where women are often deemed unworthy of receiving instruction. Grace knows no boundaries of gender. The openness of the Lord to cross gender and social barriers is instructive for us, for often such barriers become obstacles to potential ministry.<sup>24</sup>

In John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-8, 13; 20:21-23, as Jesus drew near to his departure, he spoke of the coming of the Holy Spirit, the *Parakletos*, Greek for Counselor, someone who helps another in court, as an advocate, a witness, or a representative.<sup>25</sup> The Spirit would provide the needed empowerment for service. The identity and role of the Holy Spirit is given in the Scriptures, but no mention was made of him operating in any one specific gender. Although none of the twelve disciples were women, yet throughout his ministry Jesus recognized and included women in positive

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<sup>23</sup> Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 232.

<sup>24</sup> Bock, *Luke*, NIV Application Commentary, 305.

<sup>25</sup> Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 499.

ways. A woman broke her alabaster box of spikenard and poured it on Jesus, who said “she did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her” (Mark 14:8-9). On the way to Jesus’ crucifixion a large crowd followed, and among them were many women (Luke 23:27).

Women were witnesses at the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, even at moments when the men were missing. The women followed Joseph to the tomb where the body of Jesus was laid. “After the Sabbath, on the first day of the week, very early in the morning when the women went back to the tomb with spices and ointments they saw angels who, told them of Jesus’ resurrection and instructed them to ‘go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen’ . . . so the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples” (Matthew 28:6, 8). Before they left the garden, Jesus also greeted the women and told them not to be afraid but to go and tell his disciples, his brothers, to go to Galilee to meet with him (Matthew 28:10). “When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense” (Luke 24:9- 11).

Although women were not highly regarded, yet “the women were the ones to whom the message of the resurrection was entrusted. The gap between male and female disciples widens, as the faithful account of the women falls on cynical and unbelieving ears of the men. Nothing more than useless chatter—this is how their

announcement is evaluated and discarded.”<sup>26</sup> Eventually there was confirmation of the message given by the women that Jesus was risen from the dead.

Jesus the risen Savior met with his followers, and his last instructions to them is referred to as the Great Commission: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20). This is quite a powerful injunction to the church; however, no mention is made of gender restriction. Jesus the resurrected Master further reiterated to his followers the promise of the Spirit and their role: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The promise of the Holy Spirit was for “sons and daughters,” “male and female,” all empowered to be witnesses (Luke 24:10, 22-24). Jesus, in contrast, wanted women to learn and to testify before others about God’s actions on earth to bring about transformation and quality of life. It would seem that he wanted these women whom he had taught to go on to take authoritative leadership positions themselves; that is why they were chosen to be the first witnesses. Elaine Storkey states that the outpouring of the power and release of the Holy Spirit can be viewed as the seal for the redemptive work of the cross in the lives of those who choose to believe.<sup>27</sup> In the early church, women were included in the early Christian communities; Saul was on a trek to arrest both men and women who claimed to believe in Jesus Christ (Acts 8:3; 9:2; 17:12).

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<sup>26</sup> Joel Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 839.

<sup>27</sup> Storkey, “Women in Leadership,” 88.

## The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit

Acts 2 tells about the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on all who were present in the Upper Room. Peter spoke to the crowd that gathered: “This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy . . . Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days and they shall prophesy” (Acts 2:16-18). Regarding the present discussion of gender barriers being removed, it has to be noted that in the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was being poured out, women were numbered among those who were filled with the Spirit and spoke in tongues (Acts 1:14-15; 2:1-4). The Holy Spirit also gave divine empowerment to women, so they too could be witnesses in the kingdom of God.

In the Pentecostal and charismatic movement Joel’s prophetic word and Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost that “sons and daughters would prophesy” have been the key encouragements for women to enter Christian ministry and leadership. The Pentecostal and charismatic churches claim Holy Spirit empowerment for all believers who are Spirit-filled.

The early church had a varied and faithful ministry arising from the fact that all of God’s people were gifted by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up one another (example 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; 14:1-19; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:7-16; 1 Peter 4:8-11). Any person could exercise ministry which means service, who was called and gifted by God and affirmed by the body of Christ, the church.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> David Scholer, “A Biblical Basis for Equal Partnership: Women and Men in the Ministry of the Early Church,” December 1983, accessed November 1, 2017, <http://www.fuller.global/About/Women-in-Ministry/Women-in-Ministry--The-Basis-in-the-Early-Church/>.

## **Paul's Affirmation of the Work of Women in the Early Christian Era**

The apostle Paul wrote in the post-Pentecost era and is viewed as having a negative opinion of women in ministry, but close examination of his writing shows his affirmation of women, many of whom were his colleagues. There are varying schools of thought about the interpretation of what Paul said about women in ministry; he did not hesitate to give needed restrictions on women within certain set contexts. Some of Paul's writings are difficult to understand and explain. Gender tension exists in Christianity today; some churches allow women to be involved in ministry while others forbid or limit female involvement. Repeatedly explanations for restrictions are made to the writings of Paul.

The New Testament testifies to women being given gifts from God for authoritative positions. Women were apostles, prophets, teachers, coworkers, ministers, and church overseers. Paul affirms Junia, Priscilla, and Phoebe. Phoebe and Priscilla are clearly teaching and leading men. The Bible also records the leadership roles of Mary Magdalene, Joana, Mary, Salome, Anna, Miriam, Huldah, Deborah, Phillip's four daughters, Lydia, Chloe, the Elect lady, and her Elect sister. A multitude of women testify to God's call to women to lead the church.<sup>29</sup>

Some female worshippers occupied special positions. "The New Testament records many women overseers, yet often they have been overlooked: The Elect Lady, the Elect Sister, Phoebe, Euodia, Syntyche, Prisca and possibly also Stephana, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Chloe, Lydia, Mark's mother, Nympha and Apphia."<sup>30</sup> Obviously, women were engaged in various capacities. Paul expressed appreciation to them as fellow workers and commends those who showed hospitality.

In Romans 16 the names of several women are listed, women who were a part of Paul's apostolic team. "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and

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<sup>29</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 135.

<sup>30</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 109.

to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me" (Romans 16:1-2). The first name mentioned is not that of a man, it is of Phoebe, a woman, a "benefactor because she was in a position of leadership where she could render an authoritative and effective ministry of the Word."<sup>31</sup>

Paul writing to the Ephesian church pointed out that "Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-13). In these verses no mention is made of gender; it suggests that anyone, male or female, who knows the Scripture can use it to teach, rebuke, correct, and train in righteousness, so that God's people can be prepared to do good work. According to Spencer, the positions of apostles, prophets, and teachers were the ones considered as authoritative in the early church. As time went by, those positions were occupied by both men and women.<sup>32</sup>

An apostle is someone sent with orders. The women who were present at Jesus' resurrection could be called apostles because they were sent by the angels to carry the message of Jesus' resurrection to the men. "It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, mother of Jesus and John, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense" (Luke 24:10-11). Also, in Romans 16:7, Paul states, "Greet . . . Junia, my fellow Jews, who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the

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<sup>31</sup> C. S. Cowles, *A Woman's Place? Leadership in the Church* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1993), Kindle loc. 1307.

<sup>32</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 97.

apostles and they were in Christ before I was.” Among scholars there is disagreement about the name Junia being that of a male or female.<sup>33</sup>

“John Chrysostom, a church father who wrote in the fourth century, was clearly convinced that … Andronicus and Junia were apostles and that Junia was a woman” (Romans 16:7).<sup>34</sup> Reference was made to Junia the apostle, but, because of gender concerns, much controversy surrounds this text. “Those who favor the view that Junia was not a female apostle do so because of their prior assumption that women could not be apostles, not because there is any evidence in the text.”<sup>35</sup> Women have not been highlighted by Bible scholars because of their gender. Junia was an apostle, but there has been much argument around the name, with some scholars saying that because the name is that of an apostle, it must be the name of a man. Prophets tell and foretell the message of God, with the intent of encouraging and building up people; Anna and Philip’s four daughters are mentioned in the New Testament.

Priscilla and Aquila, a husband and wife team, are referred to as fellow workers in Christ who risk their lives on Paul’s behalf, as well as for the churches of the Gentiles. A church met in their house. Paul greets Priscilla and Aquila; he refers to them as his helpers in Christ, for they assisted him in planting the church at Ephesus. Their names are mentioned six times in the New Testament, but each time Priscilla’s name is mentioned first, suggesting that she was the more prominent member of the pair. “When Priscilla and Aquila heard Apollos teach, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately” (Acts 18:26). “Priscilla and

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<sup>33</sup> Mary J. Evans, *Woman in the Bible: An Overview of All the Crucial Passages on Women’s Role* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), 124.

<sup>34</sup> Evans, *Woman in the Bible*, 124.

<sup>35</sup> J. Lee Grady, *Ten Lies the Church Tells Women: How the Bible Has Been Misused to Keep Women in Bondage* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2006), 49.

the women at Crete were teachers. The women at Crete were elders. Priscilla as well was a co-worker and church overseer.”<sup>36</sup>

In Acts 16:13-15 we are told about Lydia of Philippi, a wealthy dealer in purple cloth. Lydia can be described as a pioneer of the Christian faith. She occupied many leadership roles and she was one of the women who served as a leader of a house church. Some other female names mentioned in the New Testament are Chloe, Lyda, Nympha, the mother of John Mark, and the Elect Lady (2 John). There is the view that “the Elect Lady must be a church because she could not be a lady. Stephana could not be a woman because people were subjected to her.”<sup>37</sup> “As church developed with its hierarchy of leaders, the public involvement of ladies became less, they were excluded from top leadership groups such as priests and bishops.”<sup>38</sup>

### **Galatians 3:26-32**

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:26-29)

Paul is writing this letter to a “mixed first-century audience...in one brief sentence, Paul overthrows cultural bias by raising women to the same status as their brothers: You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26).  
39“These verses make explicit what is clear throughout the whole of the New Testament, that in relation to God, men and women stand in exactly the same position . . . Both are sinners standing in need of salvation. Similarly, both are eligible for

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<sup>36</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 120.

<sup>37</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 120.

<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Clark, “The Roles for Women,” April 1998, accessed June 24, 2015, [www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/first/roles.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/first/roles.html).

<sup>39</sup> James, *Half the Church*, 61.

salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.”<sup>40</sup> For some individuals, particularly those who are against the involvement of women in ministry, this text refers only to the “spiritual reality of equal access to God through faith in Jesus. The text does refer to this but it clearly encompasses other realities as well.”<sup>41</sup> David Scholer further postulates that “Paul’s declaration about male and female had implications too, for the life of the church. The point is not the obliteration of God’s created differences between male and female, but that sexual differentiation does not determine the participation in Christ’s Church for persons created in the image of God.”<sup>42</sup>

### **Should Women Remain Silent in Christian Ministry?**

In the ongoing debate about women in ministry 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:12 are frequently cited by those individuals who desire to restrict or prohibit female involvement in church leadership. The common thread is women being silent in the church. These passages have been used to regulate the involvement or non-involvement of women in ministry; consequently, an examination of the content is essential. “Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak but must be in submission as the law says. If they want to enquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church” (1 Corinthians 14:34-35). In 1 Corinthians 14:28-35 there are three orders to silence, and in two of those orders men are mentioned. Verse 28 commands the silence of the tongues speaker if an interpreter is not present, while verse 30 directs a prophet to silence if a revelation is made to another one sitting by. The word used for the speech of the woman in verse 34 does not refer to a formal

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<sup>40</sup> Evans, *Woman in the Bible*, 62.

<sup>41</sup> Scholer, “Biblical Basis for Equal Partnership.”

<sup>42</sup> Scholer, “Biblical Basis for Equal Partnership.”

lecture, exhortation, or teaching, but idle talk or chatter. Before trying to understand the above text, 1 Corinthians 11:5 should be examined. “Every woman who prays or prophesies...” It is quite unlikely that the women would always be silent since they were being encouraged to pray and prophesy.

There are various interpretations of this passage; it is used to support those who are in favor of females being active in ministry as well as those who restrict female involvement in ministry. Evans suggests certain questions that should be taken in consideration with any interpretation that is chosen.

1. For those in favor of absolute prohibition of females in public Christian worship or ministry, what is the explanation of 1 Corinthians 11:4 which makes mention of “every man who prays or prophesies . . .” and verse 5 “but every woman who prays or prophesies . . .”
2. Where in the Old Testament can a text be found that relates to the instruction given here about something not forbidden by the law?
3. How can verse 35 be connected to those women without husbands—unmarried or widows or those with non-Christian husbands?<sup>43</sup>

In reference to worship sessions in Corinth, Paul acknowledged that God had given gifts to believers and each one had a part to play in the worship; no gender stipulation was made. Paul encouraged women to both pray and prophesy publicly. “What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up” (1 Corinthians 14:26). No gender prohibition is here stated; the main point seems to be that gifts should be used for the purpose of edification of the whole church.

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<sup>43</sup> Evans, *Woman in the Bible*, 95.

“There are many scholars with the view that Paul was not requiring total silence, but he was placing limitations on some particular form of participation by females. There are many opinions as to what form the limitations should take.”<sup>44</sup> Some of the widely held possibilities are that prayer, prophesy, and tongue speaking are classified as speech that is directly inspired and that is permitted but that it is not the same as prepared teaching or asking of questions. This view eliminates any conflict with 1 Corinthians 11 where mention is made of women who pray or prophesy. Also, tongue speakers with no interpreters should also remain quiet; “it is difficult to understand why this should apply to women but not to men. Similarly, where does the law come in, why should speaking in tongues be seen as shameful, and what is meant by the reference to questioning their husbands at home?”<sup>45</sup>

It would seem that there were many problems in the church and Paul was trying to deal with them so that the spreading of the gospel would not be hindered. There were disruptive moments when the church was assembled. “There were women in this church who were continually interrupting the teacher to ask questions or possibly to disrupt the meeting or usurp the speaker’s authority.”<sup>46</sup> Women were allowed to be in the balcony in the synagogues but not to participate in the discussions, however, there is evidence that sometimes they were noisy and loud, shouting to their husbands below asking their opinions on points being discussed. At the Corinthian church, there was noisy, disruptive meetings.<sup>47</sup> In attempting to eliminate confusion, Paul wrote, “God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people. But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Cor 14:40).

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<sup>44</sup> Evans, *Woman in the Bible*, 97.

<sup>45</sup> Evans, *Woman in the Bible*, 97.

<sup>46</sup> Grady. *10 Lies the Church Tells Women*, 69.

<sup>47</sup> Gundry, *Woman Be Free*, 69.

Most women then were uneducated, but Paul was saying if they desire to learn anything then they should adhere to certain conditions. Rather than giving an injunction to silence women universally, it would seem that Paul was correcting a problem within the context of the church. “It does violence to the Apostle Paul’s high view of women . . . to focus exclusively on a few select passages where he is addressing problem situations and to ignore the larger portrait of all he has to say about women, particularly the equality they enjoy as full partners with men in all aspects of the life and ministry of the church.”<sup>48</sup> Paul was not requiring that women should shut their mouths and not speak at all; instead he was calling on the women to learn the Scriptures quietly and with submissiveness. It would seem that this should not be interpreted as a literal, universal command for all women to be silent at all times.

Paul’s words about silence are simply calling for teach-able-ness in his new female followers. Because women had not been trained to understand the Scriptures, they had been denied this opportunity, he was calling them to embrace the discipline of learning the word of God . . . they needed to approach the Scriptures with reverence and a submissive attitude. They could not be disciples if they were know-it-alls or if they opposed God’s word or if they flippantly questioned it. . . Paul was calling woman to listen and to learn. He was inviting them to enroll in the seminary of the Holy Spirit and to become active followers of Christ. He was not commanding them to shut their mouth and fade into the background of the church. And if Paul was calling women to learn then he fully expected them to teach and preach what they had been taught when the process of discipleship was complete.<sup>49</sup>

Paul placed emphasis on how women should learn—in quietness and submission. Quietness means in a quiet manner, not in total silence. They were expected to accept the doctrine taught by the church leaders and not by the false teachers. Quiet and submissive learning also shows that women respect their teachers and accept the teaching. This kind of admonition is only sensible. Neither men nor

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<sup>48</sup> Cowles, *A Woman’s Place?* Kindle loc. 369.

<sup>49</sup> Grady. *10 Lies the Church Tells Women*, 68-69.

women can learn if any are noisy or insubordinate. In that culture, it would have been quite a surprise to hear Paul telling women to learn. Within that context, it would seem that women were “being required not to spoil the worship by unnecessary chit-chat or distracting people from concentrating on God’s word.”<sup>50</sup> Not all women are mentioned in this text. It was the,

wives who were calling out questions to their husbands, perhaps while their husbands were prophesying or speaking in tongues. This contributed further to the noisy chaos of the meetings. Paul’s call for silence therefore was not absolute but specific; he wanted wives to wait to ask their husbands their questions at home. The real issue here is the wife’s recognition of her husband’s God-given role of “head” in relation to her; for this reason she was to . . . keep quiet when her husband was speaking in church.<sup>51</sup>

Hence the instruction that “women should remain silent in the churches, they are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church” (1 Corinthians 14:34-35). Obviously, the desire of the married women was to learn and that was now being encouraged, but if they want to inquire about something, they should ask at home. “Their fault was not the asking per se but in the corporate disorder their asking produced.”<sup>52</sup>

### **1 Timothy 2:11-15**

Those in favor of restricting women in ministry readily quote 1 Timothy 2:11, “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission,” and this is usually mentioned alongside 1 Corinthians 14:34, “women should remain silent in the churches.” The interpretation of some is that women should not speak at all in church. Others state that women should not teach adult males and women should not teach

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<sup>50</sup> Storkey, “Women in Leadership,” 91.

<sup>51</sup> Ted Cabal, ed., *The Apologetics Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Holman, 2003), 1727.

<sup>52</sup> Linda Belleville, “Women in Ministry: An Egalitarian Perspective,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, ed. Stanley Gundry and James Beck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 74.

their own husbands. “It is cited to bar women from the pastorate and deny them access to the pulpit. All evidence that women did preach and teach in the early church is ignored in order to apply this passage.”<sup>53</sup> Gundry further posits,

one cannot justify isolating a verse or two from an obvious problem context and using the isolated portion dogmatically. We simply do not know what the whole is trying to say. For that reason, we cannot pose certain possibilities and speculate as to which seems most plausible. We cannot be dogmatic in insisting part of the passage is something we are sure about and the rest a mystery. The verses are linked together in meaning, whatever the meaning may be.<sup>54</sup>

According to Spencer, Paul’s desire for women to receive instruction in 1 Timothy 2:11 was a liberating message to first-century women because they lived at a time when Jewish rabbis and Greek philosophers taught that women were not worthy of learning anything.<sup>55</sup> Other rabbinic students were encouraged to “learn in silence.”<sup>56</sup>

Timothy was well aware of the way in which Paul had worked freely with many women, some of whom are described as laborers in the gospel with him. “We will argue that Paul’s instruction to Timothy, prohibiting women from teaching or exercising authority over men (2:12), does not prescribe a universal law but describes how he deals with a specific and unique problem situation that arose in a particular church, the church at Ephesus.”<sup>57</sup> 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is viewed as one of the most difficult passages in the Bible. Interpretation is not easy, because the meaning is not clear. These verses are embraced by those who are of the opinion that women should be restricted from active participation in the ministry of the church. It is unlikely that these verses were intended to be taken as an absolute prohibition for all women.

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<sup>53</sup> Gundry, *Woman Be Free*, 74.

<sup>54</sup> Gundry, *Woman Be Free*, 75.

<sup>55</sup> Grady, *10 Lies the Church Tells Women*, 67.

<sup>56</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 77.

<sup>57</sup> Cowles, *A Woman’s Place?* Kindle loc. 396.

Virtually no scholar claims to fully understand the last part of the passage. “But women will be saved through childbearing” (1 Timothy 2:15) seems to be incapable of adequate interpretation with the information that we now have, because it is inconsistent with the rest of Scripture to say it means women are saved by bearing children. Furthermore, it is inconsistent with reality to insist that godly women do not die in childbirth, for many have died. Matthews offer insight worthy of contemplation.

In verse 15, the word women should be translated “she,” a pronoun referring back to Eve in verses 13-14. Her deception, detailed in Genesis 3:13 is followed by God’s curse on the serpent (Genesis 3:15): the offspring of the woman will eventually crush the head of the serpent. We know this passage as the first prediction in the Bible of God the Son’s final overthrow of Satan and the effects of the fall.

Verse 15 is also mistranslated by omitting “the” in front of “childbearing.” Paul wrote that she will be saved through the childbirth, that is the birth of Jesus Christ. This is spiritual salvation, not safety in childbirth.<sup>58</sup>

Regarding the role of women in the church there is connection between Paul’s alleged ban on women and the cultural and historical context in the city of Ephesus, where the cult of Artemis, a Greek goddess also called Diana, was embraced. She vowed not to be associated with or subjected to any man but to choose to remain free. Women dominated and subjugated men, and as time went by, cultic practices were infiltrating the Christian church. “Paul was addressing behaviors specific to practices common to worship in the Cult of Diana alone,”<sup>59</sup> so Paul required the women to be silent, to stop teaching, and instead to learn the Christian faith. Women were admonished to learn in quietness and submission knowing that in Christ both male and female are free and equal before God. Most women then were uneducated, but Paul was saying if they desire to learn anything, it should be done in quietness and

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<sup>58</sup> Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 106.

<sup>59</sup> “Cult of Diana in Ephesus—Women in Ministry,” April 2005, Worthy Christian Forums, accessed November 23, 2017, <https://www.worthychristianforums.com>,

submission. Rather than a rule to permanently shut woman's lips, this seems to be an exhortation to bring order in worship services.

Contrary to the teachings of the Artemis cult, Paul insists that women do not have special insight into divine revelation through the goddess. They do not have spiritual authority over men simply by virtue of gender. Paul reminds his readers that, in fact, a woman was deceived first, not a man (1 Timothy 2.13-14). By making this observation, he is countering the teaching of the Artemis cult. In effect, he is lowering the status of women to the same level as men. Because they have been led astray, he stops women from teaching. For now, they are to submit themselves to learning the Christian faith in silence (1 Timothy 2.11-12). This does not prevent women from resuming a teaching role once they have come to a proper perspective.<sup>60</sup>

## Conclusion

The Bible shows that God has given gifts to both men and women to carry out ministry, but in some parts of the world only male involvement is considered acceptable. There is an ongoing debate about whether or not women should be engaged in Christian ministry, and if so what should be their role. Different views are expressed about those women mentioned in the Bible. Gundry claims that some individuals are of the opinion that women have done many uncommon things, but not necessarily what God wants women to do; they are of the opinion that those were exceptions because no men were available. She clearly states that she finds nothing in the Bible that classifies the work of women as God's permissive will; rather, the work done by women has God's direction and approval.<sup>61</sup> Gundry further postulates that it is incorrect to say that God limits women to certain activities and does not want them to be leaders. God uses women for jobs both usual and unusual in their culture and can do the same with us today.<sup>62</sup>

God inspired human beings to write his revelation which is intended to guide his people, male and female, in all places and eras. Very often the Scripture is twisted

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<sup>60</sup> "Cult of Diana in Ephesus."

<sup>61</sup> Gundry, *Woman Be Free*, 89.

<sup>62</sup> Gundry, *Woman Be Free*, 91.

and used out of context to limit or hinder females from carrying out their God-given assignment. “History is littered with examples of people who have used the Bible to justify cruelty, injustice or bizarre behavior. Anyone can take one or two obscure verses from Scripture, view them through a cultural lens or mix them with a jaundiced personal opinion and then build a doctrine that is totally contrary to the overall message of the Bible.”<sup>63</sup>

Christian ministry is for the advancing of the kingdom of God. Leadership, male or female, should be “seen as service rather than of status . . . seen as a gift to the whole congregation for the benefit of the whole.”<sup>64</sup> There are some women particularly in the Pentecostal ministry who are becoming more and more actively engaged. They claim to have found their commission and guide in the Scripture rightly divided. Also, they have been called by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit. They have challenges but aided by the Holy Spirit they are still desirous of equipping God’s people for works of service and building up the body of Christ. It is clear, ministry is not about position, status, and authority but service.

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<sup>63</sup> Grady, *10 Lies the Church Tells Women*, 7.

<sup>64</sup> Evans, *Woman in the Bible*, 110.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PROJECT DESIGN

#### **Introduction**

While in many churches the inclusion or exclusion of women in Christian ministry is being debated, in the Church of God of Prophecy internationally, women are ordained, and many are actively engaged in ministry. The branches of the Church of God of Prophecy in the fourteen parishes in Jamaica are led by 191 male pastors and 116 female pastors. There is an increase in the number of women entering ministry in the nation of Jamaica. In the parishes of St. Catherine and Kingston, there are 58 male pastors and 37 female pastors. Women's leadership roles in the Church of God of Prophecy in Jamaica have been expanding over the years; almost 40 percent of the pastorate in the region chosen for study are women.

With the changes and development taking place in the world today, along with the mandate given to the church to advance the kingdom of God, it is worthwhile to examine all the different aspects of the ministry of the church. Based on my experience in working alongside my husband in Jamaica for twelve years (1998–2010), much consideration was given to the female pastors and pastors' wives; annual retreats were held, geared at offering encouragement to the leading women in the nation, hoping that there would be emotional, spiritual, and social help. In the literature that was read throughout the Doctor of Ministry study, women were seen playing a significant role in the spread of global Pentecostalism and that aroused concern for the women in ministry locally. Being familiar with the region and acquainted with pastors, the researcher has chosen to focus on the women in ministry/female pastors in the parishes of St. Catherine and Kingston. The goal of this

study is to ascertain the nature, causes, and extent of the challenges being experienced by some of the female pastors. It is hoped that the insight gained will be valuable to women in ministry, those in leadership, and the church in general.

In all areas of life there are many challenges, and undoubtedly, women in ministry encounter numerous challenges. What are their stories? Who is listening, and how well are they empowered to equip the people of God and to build up the body of Christ in the parishes of St. Catherine and Kingston, Jamaica? When the challenges and issues that women encounter are known, then leaders and supervisors will know what needs to be done to help them overcome their problems. Based on the result of this study, relevant, intentional plans can be made for the equipping and the empowering of female pastors. Relief is likely to occur for some of the individuals, just to know that they are recognized as servants of God and some attention is being directed at them in this study. Also, church members will be able to examine their beliefs and attitudes and, one hopes, take action that will make a positive difference for the church in general.

### **Description of Research Participants**

Contact was made with the administrative staff at the national office in Jamaica to ascertain the number of male and female pastors within the parishes of Kingston and St. Catherine, Jamaica. The process began with oral communication in April 2017, during the National Convention in Jamaica. Communication took place with fifteen female pastors regarding my desire for them to be participants in a research project that I had planned. Positive response came from twelve females, and they were selected as the participants. They are all indigenous women who are active in ministry within the church in urban and suburban communities. These women fit

into different, defined, marital status: one single, four married, six widows, and one separated. Three of the widows who were already active in ministry were appointed as replacement pastors for the congregations when their husbands died.

Although the focus is on female pastors, I also want to know and include the opinion of some male pastors who work in the same region as the female participants. Six senior/long-standing male Church of God of Prophecy pastors from the same region were also told about the project and asked to be involved.

### **Design Strategy**

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the challenges of women in ministry. A descriptive case study that involves collecting both quantitative and qualitative data will be done to ascertain the nature and causes of the challenges being encountered by twelve women pastors in ministry in the parishes of Kingston and St. Catherine, Jamaica. I choose to do a case study because it allows me to carry-out an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context.”<sup>1</sup> The data for this project will be comprised of opinions, attitudes, and other related information, collected by the research methods of surveys/questionnaires and unstructured interviews.

A questionnaire (see Appendix A) for female pastors will be prepared and sent by email to each of the twelve participants, along with an informed consent letter (see Appendix B) which outlines the project to be done, its purpose, risks, confidentiality, and all that is involved with agreeing to be a participant. On the questionnaire for the female pastors are twenty-two questions, structured multiple-choice questions, and statements requiring “false or true” or “yes or no” responses; the Likert scale is

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<sup>1</sup> Randy L. Joyner, William A. Rouse, and Allan A. Glatthorn, *Writing the Winning Thesis or Dissertation: A Step-by-Step Guide* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2013), 77.

attached to seven questions which will allow the respondents to choose one option that best aligns with their view, showing the degree of agreement, the extent to which they agree or disagree. There is one open ended question, “What are some of the main obstacles that you have encountered?” The questions created would have been influenced by ideas from the literature which presumably may be, sources of challenge, such as Scripture interpretation, culture, leadership opportunities for women in ministry beyond the scope of the local church, sources of support and encouragement for women, and remuneration.

The majority of completed questionnaires were promptly returned, but the researcher had to send a few reminders. Participants had an opportunity to share their experiences. To ensure that data were protected and personal, identifiable information such as names and emails that may reference the participants were changed to numbers. Effort had to be made to avoid personal biases.

The unstructured interview (see Appendix C) will be done by telephone with six of the female participants. The questions will be guided by the following:

1. The biblical justification that can be made for women in ministry or leadership.
2. Interpretation or application of Scriptures such as 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:11: “women must be silent in the church.”
3. Suggestions that may help to alleviate some of the challenges being faced by women in ministry.

On the questionnaire for male pastors there will be six questions: four structured multiple-choice questions/statements to which the Likert scale is attached, and two open-ended questions. The purpose of unstructured interview with the male pastors is to hear them express their opinions about women in ministry.

The data from research will be recorded in two segments. Part 1 will be information gleaned from the questionnaire and unstructured interviews done by twelve women in pastoral ministry. Part 2 will be information from the questionnaire done by six male pastors and an unstructured interview.

## **Results and Findings**

### Part 1: Responses from Women in Ministry

#### **Responses to the Survey**

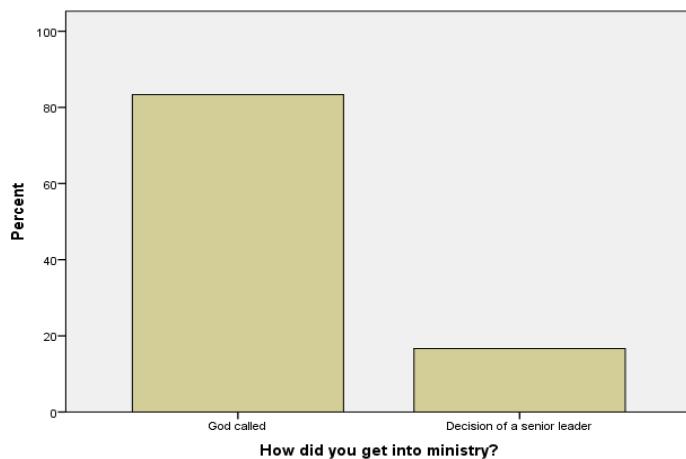
The following major questions will be used to guide the recording of the data collection process in part 1 (see table 1).

**Table 1: Major Questions Covered by Questionnaire**

Major Questions	
1. What is the biblical/theological perspective on allowing women to be church leaders or pastors?	1,6,10
2. What are the challenges and restrictions experienced by female pastors in St. Catherine and Kingston, Jamaica?	2, 4, 5,7,8,9,11, 16,
3. How equipped are COGOP female pastors in St. Catherine and Kingston, Jamaica, and how can some challenges be alleviated?	3,12,13,17,18, 19,20,21

#### *Participants*

Of the female pastors, 66.7% are in the age category of 50-59 years. These are mature women who have been serving as pastors for a minimum of six years and a maximum of twenty-seven years. Of them, 33.3% are full-time pastors and 66.7% are bi-vocational pastors. Church membership for 75% of the participants is more than one hundred. Ten of the twelve participants claim to enjoy being pastors; for two the enjoyment is only sometimes.



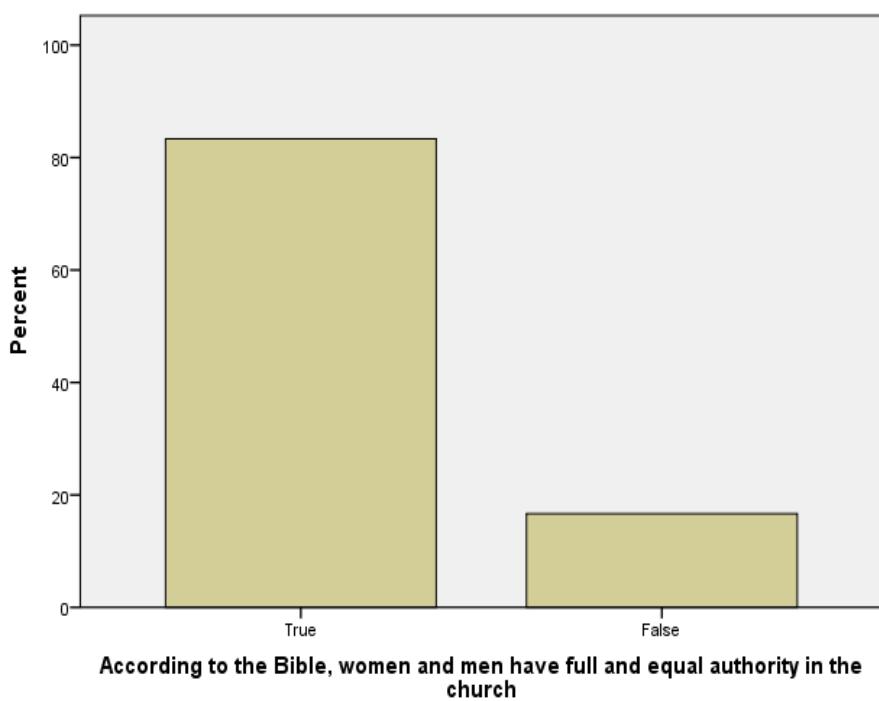
**Figure 1: Statistical Information about Women's Entry into Ministry**

In most cases in Church of God of Prophecy, individuals who sense the call of God to preach or teach the Word of God and be involved in Christian service share their desire with the leaders of the church. In other cases, encouragement to enter ministry is given by those who recognize the gifting or calling. The local church validates the call and becomes the forum from which ministry is practiced. In this research, 16.7 % claim that they entered pastoral ministry because it was decided by a senior leader, but the majority, 83.3%, claim that they were called by God to Christian ministry. Based on the responses, 91.7% seem to have an awareness of the fact that Christian ministry is accompanied by challenges for both male and female. Effective church ministry and challenges go together, irrespective of gender. These women in ministry do not stand alone. They claim to gain support from family and friends and some of the people in the ministerial fraternity, male and female. In response to two different questions (questions 3a and b), 83.3% claim that they are fortified in ministry by other female pastors, and 41.7% by male colleagues. Whatever the views of others may be, 91.6% claim that they are flourishing as pastors.

### *What Is the Biblical Perspective on Allowing Women to Be Leaders/Pastors?*

It is from the Bible that we all learn the will of God. The church is guided by the Word of God as recorded in the Bible. There are varying interpretations of some passages due to factors such as ignorance, lack of training, or emphasis on cultural traditions. Many of the challenges that women in ministry encounter are derived from biblical interpretation. Some people will agree that not everything in Scripture is readily or easily understood. There are varying opinions regarding the issue of the role of women in ministry. The female participants' response to questions regarding the Bible is stated below.

- It is noted in the survey that 33.3% disagree and 25% strongly disagree with the statement that "Scripture is not clear about women in church leadership." For 58.3% the Scripture is clear about the involvement of women in church leadership, but 41.7% agree with the statement that the Bible is not clear about women in church leadership.
- It is strongly endorsed that God in the working out of his purposes shows no preference for gender but uses whoever he chooses. For 91.7% of the sample, there is strong agreement that God uses both male and female in church ministry.
- It was noted through the survey that 83.3% females have stated as true the statement that according to the Bible, women and men have full and equal authority in the church (see figure 2). Consequently, there should be no gender barrier issues with women and men all having full and equal authority-power.
- Among participants, 8.3% select the statement that women are restricted from leadership because there are not many female leaders in the Bible.



**Figure 2: The Bible's Teaching about Women in Leadership**

*What Are the Challenges and Restrictions Experienced by Female Pastors in Jamaica?*

Many of the challenges being experienced by female pastors are stated in responses given to the open-ended question 16, What are some of the main obstacles that you have encountered as a female pastor? Responses given for this question are placed under these headings: human resources, financial resources, infrastructure challenges, and personal challenges.

**Human Resources**

Lack of commitment from members to the cause of Christ and to the church results in more work and stress being placed on the pastor. There are several church members with ability to participate in the programs of the church, but they are

uncommitted, inconsistent, or unavailable, or they are too busy to serve. Some of the willing individuals lack ability and spiritual maturity. The following challenges were listed:

- Resistance or rejection from some brothers and sisters in the church who deliberately show that they are biased, jealous, or not pleased about having females in a position of authority.
- Subtle resistance of some brothers toward female pastors.
- Bad attitude of some men toward having a woman as pastor. They behave in a way that suggests they feel threatened; some will refer to the Scriptures that women should be silent.
- Some key persons in leadership positions cannot be trusted, They say one thing before one's face and something else behind the back.
- Church of God of Prophecy has a patriarchal structure that prohibits women from getting to top leadership.

### Spiritual Development

- Trying to get the church to have a passion for evangelism.
- Few persons attend the main discipleship meetings, Bible study, or prayer and fasting services.
- The level of input as a pastor is not reflected in the spiritual maturity of the members. This can be very discouraging sometimes.
- Little evidence of spiritual growth in-spite of various effort to teach the Word of God and to offer counseling.

- Negative influence on believers of Revivalism and Muslim religion in the community. Muslim outreach efforts are accompanied by monetary remuneration or gifts that attract poverty-stricken individuals.

### Financial Resources

- There are financial difficulties arising from the limited amount of money available through irregularity in tithing and giving; lack of financial support.
- Low financial resources limit the number of projects that the church can accomplish.
- Sometimes there is a lack of even minimal financial compensation.
- Remuneration/stipend given to pastor could be much better.

### Infrastructure Challenges

- Need for additional property, larger facility, or more space and furniture.
- Challenges with overseeing the construction of buildings and the setting up and removal of multimedia sets. There are no or few men in some congregations.

### Personal Challenges

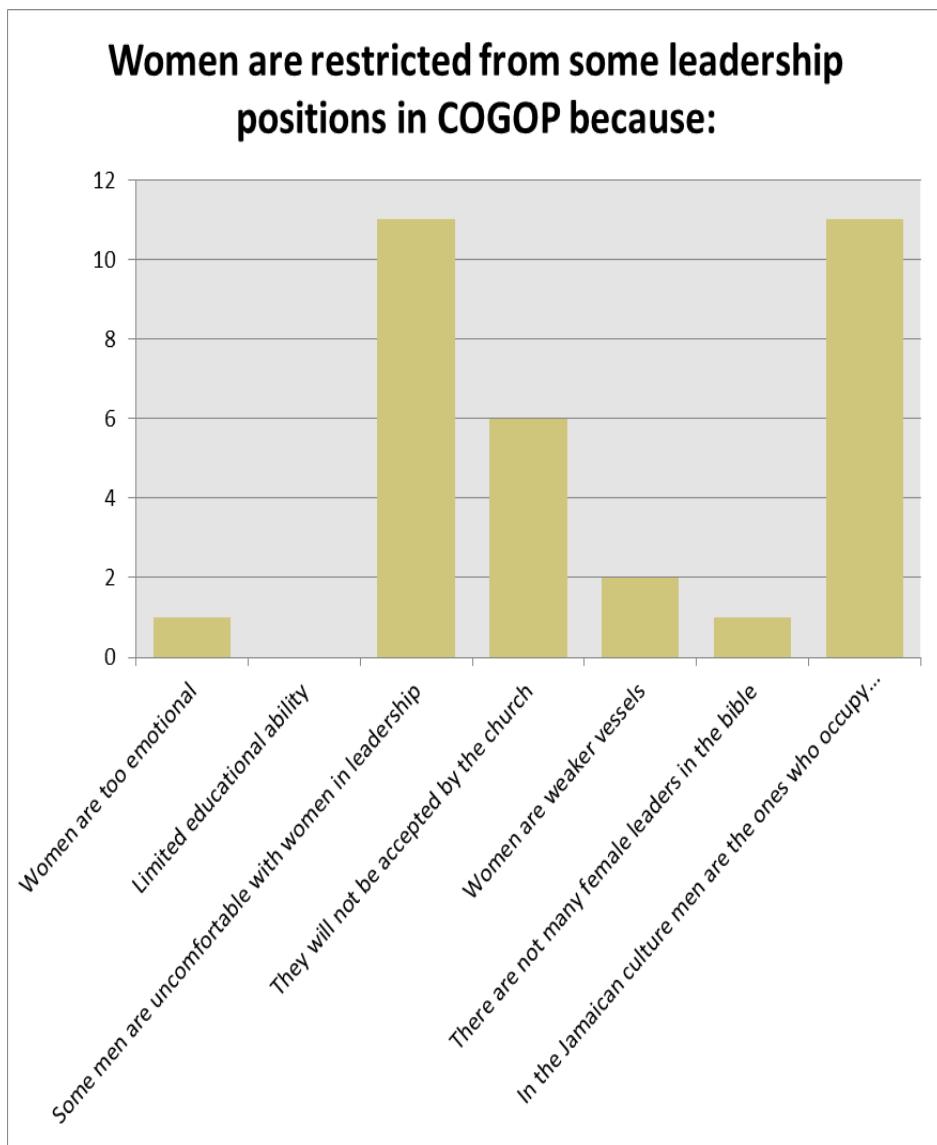
- Traveling alone to some events.
- Little or no ministerial acknowledgement or support from church leaders.
- Membership shows little sensitivity to the needs of the pastor.
- Lack of transportation.
- Difficulty of balancing duties between church, family, and other activities.

- Physical limitations, emotional instability, lonely feelings (widows), and hormone imbalances.
- Unrealistic expectations concerning grooming, especially from females, based on culture.

*Women Are Restricted from Some Leadership Positions in Church of God of Prophecy.*

For this question (5), seven reasons are given, and six were selected.

In Church of God of Prophecy, women who sense a call to ministry have the honor of being ordained after a period of trial; several are pastors of local congregations. There seems to be a consensus that women are restricted from some top-level leadership positions. The reasons selected for women to be restricted from some leadership position varies. Of all the reasons given for them to make a choice, there is no selection of the option “limited educational ability.” (That women are becoming more and more educated cannot be denied.) There is a small selection of the following statements: “women are too emotional,” “there are not many female leaders in the Bible,” and “women are the weaker vessels.” Of the participants, 91.7% have indicated that “some men are uncomfortable with women in leadership.” “Women in leadership will not be accepted by the church” (the church means both male and female) was cited by 50%. The option “In Jamaican culture, men are the ones who occupy top leadership positions” was selected by 91.7%.

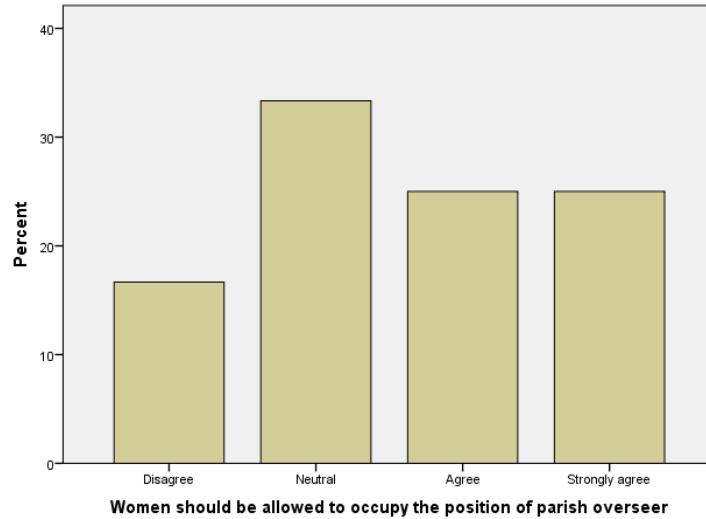


**Figure 3: Reasons Women Are Restricted from Some Leadership Positions in COGOP**

*Women Presently Oversee Local Congregations. They Should Also Be Allowed to Occupy the Position of Parish Overseer.*

Traditionally men are the ones appointed as overseers. Women are granted the privilege and responsibility to oversee the local church where they occupy the position of pastor. However, they are not to oversee other ministers or multiple congregations; that seems to be a position reserved for men. How is that viewed by

the women, particularly those with training? In their responses to this question (4), 16.7% of the women disagree, while 33.3% are neutral, 25% agree, and 25% strongly agree. A significant number have selected the neutral response (see figure 4).

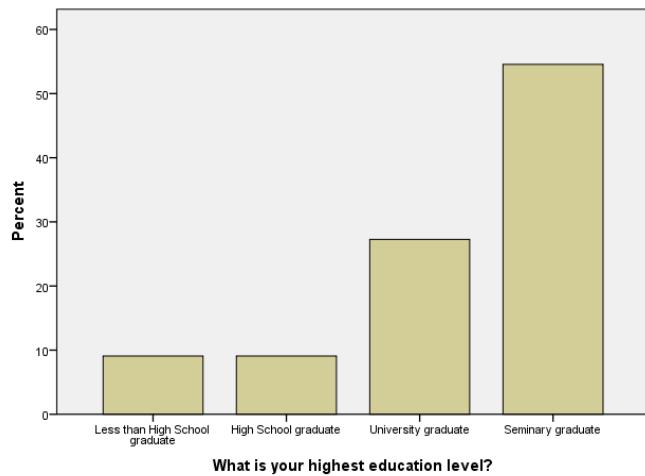


**Figure 4: Views about the Position of Overseer**

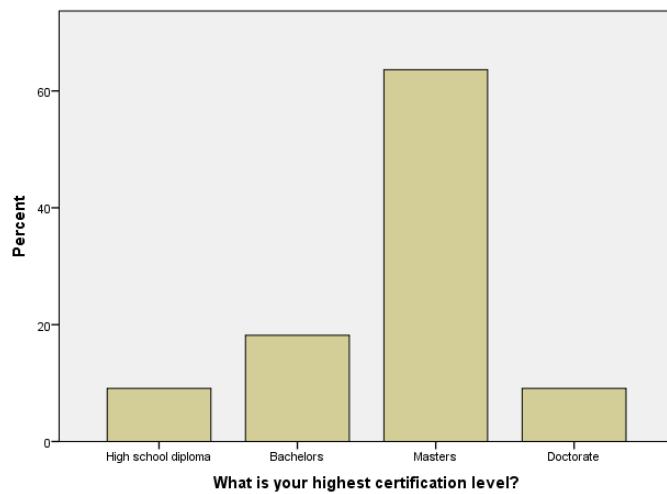
*How Equipped Are COGOP Female Pastors . . .and What Can Be Done to Alleviate Some of the Challenges Being Faced by Women in Ministry?*

The majority of females in this sample are at a reasonably fair standard of education: 27.3% are university graduates (see figure 5). It stands out in a significant way that 54.4% are seminary graduates, educated in theology and trained to be religious leaders. Of all the participants, 63.6% are at the master's level. The Church of God of Prophecy has leadership development as one of its core values, and in 2008 Bishop Hector Ortiz was instrumental in getting a link between the church and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. A Program- Leader of Leaders/Pastoral track was designed to train top leaders, as well as pastors and ministers. Four of the six

participants who identified themselves as seminary graduates received their training from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.



**Figure 5: Education Levels of Participants**



**Figure 6: Certification Level of Participants**

### *Encouragement and Affirmation in Ministry*

Encouragement and affirmation are needed in ministry, and everyone benefits from healthy relationships. In response to question 11, 75% of these women feel that they are accepted by those in the community. However, in response to question 8, “The male COGOP membership in Jamaica is pleased with the large number of female pastors,” 41.7% disagreed and 8.3% strongly disagreed; 41.7% remain neutral, and 8.3% agree with the statement. Female participants claim that they are encouraged by their COGOP leaders. For their health, well-being, love, and emotional support, they are not dependent on the congregation or the community. Friends, family, and the district overseer are given as sources of support, and women are fortified by being in various relationships such as the ministerial fraternity in their region, other female pastors, and some male colleagues.

Money is essential. Remuneration for most local churches is taken from tithes paid into the treasury of each local church. Pastors are paid varying amount based on the size and economic level of members and the financial state of the church. Of the participants, 66.7% claim they receive salary for ministry work.

### Unstructured Interviews with Women

At the commencement of the interview, each interviewee is reminded of the purpose of the research study and the project title and given the assurance of confidentiality.

### *What Biblical Justification Can the Church Make for Allowing Women to Be Pastors?*

- Examples in Scripture of female involvement in the things of God.
- Names of females cited from the Old Testament: Deborah and Esther.

- There should be no discrimination in spreading the good news to the world. All Christians should be sharing the gospel in all forums.
- Look at women's role in sharing the message of the resurrection.
- The Bible states a woman will surpass a man.
- Joel's prophecy that the Spirit of the Lord would be poured on "sons" and "daughters."
- The Holy Spirit was poured out on women also on the day of Pentecost— women empowered.
- Several female servants of the church are mentioned in Rom 16.
- In Philippians mention is made of women who labored with Paul in the gospel.
- God allowed good success when both male and female work together: Deborah and Barak.
- All genders are one in Christ (Galathians 3:8).

*People's Understanding of Scripture, particularly "Women Must Be Silent in the Church."*

- Paul was addressing cultural concerns; not all women have husbands at home.
- The message was not intended for all women everywhere.
- The text is not understood.
- There is a need for proper teaching.
- Some mix traditions and the Word.

### *What Can Be Done to Alleviate Some of the Challenges?*

- Women need to maintain daily consecration, seek right company, and encourage each other.
- Seek to be empowered; do not allow self to be intimidated by what others think or say.
- The general church needs education; some, due to interpretation of Scripture and culture, do not respect the authority or female leaders.
- Those in authority need to put somethings in place: instruction to change negative thinking and ways.
- Women need to know who they are as servants of God.
- Female leaders need more assistance or a support system of the national church.
- Pastors, male and female, need to support each other.
- Those who understand Scripture must let their voices be heard.
- God placed both Adam and Eve in the garden to work together.
- Barak was not willing to go into battle without Deborah. Men and women can work together.
- Esther succeeded because God allowed success.
- God does not exempt the woman. Build up self with the word. Imitate Mary, who sat at the feet of Jesus. Jesus told Martha that Mary had chosen the better part.
- Teach people in and outside the church to offer encouragement to women in ministry as servants of God, instead of dishonor.
- Get needed rest and request help where it can be found.

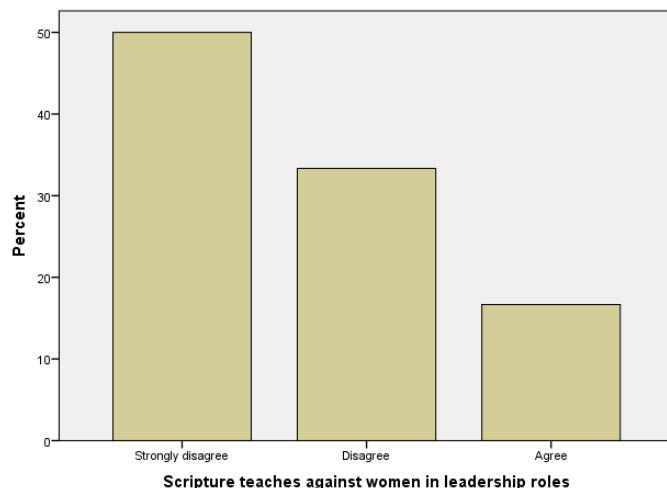
The participants in this sample did a good job at showing that they are familiar with the Word of God.

## Part 2: Male Pastors' Contribution to the Project

### Responses to Survey

#### *Question 1: Scripture Teaches Against Women in Leadership Roles.*

To varying degree the male participants expressed their disagreement with the statement: 33.3% disagree and 50% strongly disagree. However, 16.7% agree that Scripture teaches against women in leadership (see figure 7).



**Figure 7: Scripture Teaching about Women in Leadership**

#### *Question 2: Women Are Capable to Serve in Church Leadership.*

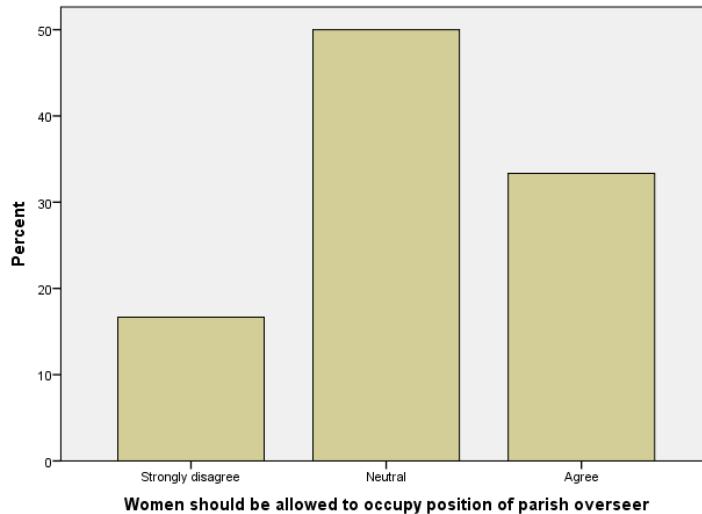
All the male participants agree; 50% agree, and the others strongly agree. There is no question of female capability.

#### *Question 3: God Desires Only Men to Be Leaders.*

All the men disagree with the statement that God desires only men to be leaders.

#### *Question 4: Women Should Be Allowed to Occupy the Position of Parish Overseer.*

Figure 8 illustrates the results: 50% are neutral, 16.7% strongly disagree, and 33.3% agree.



**Figure 8: Men's Views about Women as Parish Overseers**

Women should be allowed to occupy the position of parish overseer (one area of top-level leadership). This statement was placed on the questionnaire of female and male pastors.

**Table 2: Comparison of Men's and Women's Views about Women as Parish Overseers**

Response	Female Percent	Male Percent
Agree	25%	33.3%
Strongly agree	25%	16.7%
Disagree	16.7%	-
Neutral	33.3%	50%

That a female disagreed was an unexpected response. The participant also in the interview expressed the opinion that leadership at the top level belongs to men. All parish or national overseers have been and are male. However, 50% of females and

males believe the position of a parish overseer (part of top leadership) could be given to a woman.

*Question 5: What Are Some Challenges That Women in Ministry Seem to Have?*

Male pastors have observed:

- Female ministers are treated with less respect and recognition than what is shown to their male counterparts. Sometimes they are not recognized for the service they give. They are sometimes ignored; not much mention is made of the work they do.
- Females must work harder and longer before some church members seem to be convinced that they are capable to function.
- Cultural biases and norms mitigate against female leadership. Some men will not readily listen to or respond to the ministry of women; there is subtle mockery because of the biases.
- Pastoral ministry is viewed as male domain. There is the belief that some things in ministry should be done by males only (e.g., performing the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper).
- Some women travel long distances to church and other functions associated with ministry, and they have the challenge of trying to balance their time between ministry demands and family life.
- Some people do view women as inferior and do not think they should be led by female pastors.
- There are biblical misinterpretations and lack of teaching about the role and importance of women in ministry and the changes made by the church.

*Question 6: What Suggestions Would You Give to the Women in Ministry in Your Region?*

Male pastors suggest that women in ministry should

- View themselves as helpmeets, empowered to work alongside men in ministry.
- Seek to control their emotions.
- Show they recognize that men are the God-ordained leaders.
- Remember that they are called by God into ministry and should not be daunted by the numerous challenges. Since God has called, he will keep.
- Not doubt their ability to do the work of God, not limit themselves in any way because of their gender but continue steadfast in ministry.
- They should seek to be catalysts for change through solid biblical/theological teaching of Scripture.
- Women in ministry would benefit from a greater understanding of the issues they face. Some are rooted in cultural traditions and what use to take place in the church.
- Not try to appear anti-male.
- Seek to understand self and remain self-confident and assured. Walk confidently in one's calling from God and do not be afraid to assert authority in areas given as the need arise.
- Find comfort in the fact that Jesus did not rebuke but was welcoming to women.
- Maintain a godly perspective on female involvement in Christian ministry and persevere beyond cultural biases.

## **Unstructured Interviews with Male Pastors**

Interviews were done on the phone as a guided conversation with five of the six male pastors. Additional questions were asked to ensure that main points were woven into the conversation. The following questions were used to guide the process.

### **What Are Your Thoughts about Women Being Allowed Full Participation in Ministry?**

- God uses women too.
- Male and female should work together.
- More time and effort need to be spent addressing issues in local, not just assembly level. Reference was made to 1996, when the church decided to allow women to have more freedom.
- It is important for women to have right attitude and not belittle men.
- Have no problem with the women; some are so hard working.
- They do good at leading the core value of prayer.

### **The Number of Female Pastors Is Increasing. Is It Positive or Negative for the Church?**

- It is negative to have women in the majority; leadership is primarily for men.
- God has a special role for men in leadership.
- Women are becoming more educated; many men are not academically inclined.

- This will affect the church later; deliberate action needed to help the men.
- The ministry of some women in the past has been quite powerful.

## **What Should Be Done to Ensure the Advancement of Ministry in a Biblical Manner?**

- The ideal is for male and female to work together in ministry.
- Help people to understand that ministry is not about the gender that has the power but the cause of Christ.
- Ministry should not be based on cultural traditions but on the Word of God.
- All authority belongs to God.
- Those who are knowledgeable need to instruct others; there is uncertainty about the background of some things in the Bible.
- Have more forums with instruction, not just sermons.

### **Summary of Findings**

This research has confirmed that women in ministry in Kingston and St. Catherine Jamaica, are experiencing challenges. These challenges are of different types and different natures and vary from one individual to another. I have found that the women expected challenges because of the spiritual nature of Christian ministry. Some challenges can be classified as arising from internal sources and others from external sources. These women in ministry have physical, emotional, social, and financial challenges. For many the personal challenges are day-to-day survival issues: caring for their families and meeting the demands of life as they seek to fulfill the role of pastor, employee, mother, and wife. Not being able to acquire needed transport can prove very difficult when there is the need to move over long distances.

Some of the challenges result from relating to the members of their congregation and the people in the community where they serve. People are busy, inconsistent, and uncommitted; they are very individualistic. Some are insincere; they say one thing and mean something else. Few display much passion for the advancement of the kingdom of God. The effort made by some pastors to promote discipleship is not commensurate with the result. Some church attendees by their behavior demonstrate spiritual immaturity.

Christian ministry has been traditionally dominated by men. Now, with an increase in the number of women, some people, both male and female, in the church and community will express verbally and by action their displeasure at having female leaders. In some cases, the participants describe it as subtle resistance; nothing is said, but there is lack of cooperation and little or no effort made. Reference is frequently made to the writings of the apostle Paul where women are instructed to be silent in the church and not to have authority over men. The church maintains a structure where those in top leadership are men, particularly bishops. Many challenges are derived from biblical interpretations. While the majority agree that God uses both male and female and that men and women should have full and equal authority in the church, there is still a discrepancy about women occupying certain positions.

Several challenges arise out of the economic state of the nation. For some people, tithing and giving become less with limited income. This fact affects the projects that the church can target and the assistance that it can give to needy people, as well as how well the pastor can be compensated. In some communities there are spiritual groups opposed to the Christian church; they play the role of distracting the people. In their outreach, they focus on contrary teachings that seek to meet economic and social needs of the people. Some church facilities have limited space and are not

able to accommodate the number of attendees. As an effort is made to acquire property, relocate, or do construction, big challenges emerge. Fund raising plans or activities sometimes fail. Some activities or jobs require physical strength, and in some congregations, there are a limited number of men.

When asked to select reasons for women to be restricted from some leadership positions, there was selection of women being emotional, being weaker vessels, and not many female leaders mentioned in the Bible. However, a large percentage of women endorse that “men are uncomfortable with women in leadership” and in Jamaican culture men are the ones who occupy top leadership positions. Also, half of the sample selected the statement “women in leadership will not be accepted by the church—male and female.”

Women are equipped for top leadership. Most participants claim that God uses both male and female, but men are uncomfortable with women in leadership, they will not be accepted by the church, and in Jamaican culture men are the ones who occupy top leadership positions. Irrespective of training that females are getting and their years of experience, there are established traditional, cultural, and gender barriers. The parish overseer is responsible for supervising other ministers and multiple congregations. The national overseer and his administration committee have responsibility for all the ministers and congregations within the nation. In response to question 4, should women also be allowed to occupy the position of parish overseer, there were some unexpected responses: one woman disagreed, and a significant number remained neutral. Fifty percent of the females agreed that women can occupy the position.

Methods must be found to deal with the problems that these women in ministry are faced with. The advancement of the cause of Christ is essential, and

progress can be impeded by ignoring the challenges of so many women. The following chapter will contain a report on the project outcomes.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### OUTCOMES

#### Introduction

“One of the most challenging issues facing the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement in the 21st-century concerns the role of women in the ministry and leadership of the church.”<sup>1</sup> Within each denomination the discussion is at different stages. In the Church of God of Prophecy, women are ordained-appointed, consecrated, and granted authority to perform duties as servants of God. They have what is regarded as freedom, and in some parts of the world women serve as pastors, shepherds, of God’s people. This qualitative research was designed to examine the challenges being experienced by women in ministry in the Church of God of Prophecy in St. Catherine and Kingston, Jamaica, one of the larger Caribbean islands. This study provided the answers to the following questions:

1. What is the biblical/theological perspective on allowing women to be church leaders or pastors?
2. What are the challenges and restrictions experienced by female pastors in St. Catherine and Kingston, Jamaica?
3. How equipped are these female pastors in St. Catherine and Kingston, Jamaica, and how can some of their challenges be alleviated?

A descriptive case study was done to examine the challenges of women in ministry. The main participants were twelve female pastors, and additional data were gleaned from six male pastors who do ministry in the same region as the women. The research methods of surveys/questionnaires and unstructured interviews were used to

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<sup>1</sup> Estrelda Alexander and Amos Yong, *Philip’s Daughters: Women in Pentecostal-Charismatic Leadership*, Princeton Theological Monograph 104 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 2.

collect data. Based on the data that have been garnered, these women in ministry are experiencing some challenges, and in this chapter my goal is to report the outcomes from my research. Obviously, there are many varying opinions and cultural limitations to this issue of women in ministry; in this study several themes have surfaced. Christine Smith seems to be describing the women in ministry in Jamaica: “The ranks of women serving as senior pastors are growing . . . their journeys are varied, their testimonies are compelling, and their insights are provocative.”<sup>2</sup> Of significance is the Creator’s intention, which can be found by examining the biblical perspective.

### **The Biblical/Theological Perspective**

God uses male and female, whoever he desires, whenever he desires, to do whatever he desires. The Bible is the textbook used by the church and based on how it is interpreted it can be used to offer freedom to women in ministry; in other cases, it is used to prohibit women from being involved in ministry. While it is from the Bible that we learn the will of God, I have found that some of the challenges that women experience arise from the interpretation or misinterpretation of the Scriptures by pastors, colleagues, parishioners, and society in general.

In this study the women were given the opportunity to share some of their challenges and what they perceive to be the cause of the challenges that they were experiencing. Of the females in this sample, 58.3% claim that Scripture is clear about the involvement of women in church leadership, and 41.7% claim that the Bible is not clear on the issue of women’s involvement. The negative response was unexpected. Is it that these women are involved in ministry but are not all certain about the

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<sup>2</sup> Christine Smith, *Beyond the Stained-Glass Ceiling: Equipping and Encouraging Female Pastors* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2013), xii.

legitimacy of their position as female pastors? Their responses to further questions prove that the majority find validity and sanction for women in ministry from the Word of God. Of the respondents, 91.7% agree that God in the working out of his purpose uses both male and female in church ministry. Also, 83.3% of these female pastors agree that according to the Bible, women and men have full and equal authority in the church. Reference is made to Galatians 3:26-28 and to the writings of Mary Evans, who states that “these verses make explicit what is clear throughout the whole of the New Testament, that in relation to God, men and women stand in exactly the same position.”<sup>3</sup> Also, David Scholer opined that “Paul’s declaration about male and female had implications too, for the life of the church . . . sexual differentiation does not determine the participation in Christ’s Church for persons created in the image of God.”<sup>4</sup> God can use women to accomplish great things, as he used Deborah and Esther in the Old Testament, and in the New, the Samaritan woman at the well and the four daughters of Philip.

In the unstructured interviews, when women were asked about the biblical justification that the church can make for allowing women to be pastors, reference was made to examples of female involvement in the plans of God as recorded in both Old and New Testament. A few participants tried to name some of the women who labored with the apostle Paul in the gospel, several female servants are mentioned from Romans 16, and it was pointed out that God allowed good success when male and female worked together. It would have been disappointing if these female Pentecostals did not make mention of Joel’s prophecy and Peter’s endorsement of the

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<sup>3</sup> Mary Evans, *Woman in the Bible: An Overview of All the Crucial Passages on Women’s Role* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), 62.

<sup>4</sup> David Scholer, “A Biblical Basis for Equal Partnership: Women and Men in the Ministry of the Church,” December 1983, accessed November 1, 2017, [https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cloversites.com/8a/8a615199-836f-4fee-8005-75cf45f1a71c/documents/Egalitarian\\_Position.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cloversites.com/8a/8a615199-836f-4fee-8005-75cf45f1a71c/documents/Egalitarian_Position.pdf).

Holy Spirit being poured out on “sons and daughters.” These expressions confirm that they view themselves as being empowered by the Holy Spirit and included in the last days’ ministry of Christ. It is essential for everyone in ministry to be able to give biblical justification for what they do in response to the Spirit of God, “to . . . always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15).

Of the male pastors in the sample, 83.3% also accept that there is no teaching in Scripture against women occupying leadership roles. They all disagree with the statement that God desires only men to be leaders. However, 16.7% of the male pastors agree that Scripture teaches against women in leadership. Could this in a small way be contributing to the challenges that the female pastors encounter? The interpretation of the Bible forms the polity of many churches, and they are the ones who based on their culture establish gender barriers. In their resistance to women being in leadership in the church, people frequently refer to the writings of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12, claiming that women should be quiet and not have authority over men. There is an uncertainty about the correct interpretation of these passages. In some cases, there are individuals who argue that the verses should be taken literally; consequently, women should not be leaders in church. Varying interpretations of these texts are used in the ongoing debates against women who serve in Christian ministry. Some challenges that women in ministry encounter are due to the ambivalence related to biblical interpretation.

I have found that “earnest, Spirit-filled, Bible believing Christians can have strong differences of opinion about the Scriptures. Theologians, scholars and commentators all study the Scriptures but they do not agree on the interpretation of

the passages.”<sup>5</sup> This study endorses the opinion of Smith that the Bible is frequently used out of context, misinterpreted, and used to justify denying women leadership roles in the church.<sup>6</sup> Carroll Osburn also states that effort should be made to “understand the underlying intent of the Biblical text, so the true meaning of the text can be ascertained.”<sup>7</sup> I concur with Aida Besançon Spencer that the Bible “should be our authority for action, not our desires or experiences.”<sup>8</sup>

Concerning the call of God, the majority of participants in this study endorse the writing of Spencer, who, after asking if women are called by God, gives the Bible’s answer of a resounding “yes”<sup>9</sup> The majority, constituting 83.3% of these females, claim that they sense the call of God to ministry. Who can deny their unwavering insistence that they are called by God? They sensed the call and responded positively by availing themselves to be leaders in what was formerly a male dominated profession. It is God who by his Spirit places a call in the heart of believers to be bearers of the gospel of Jesus and to be involved in Christian ministry by being shepherds for the people of God. The women in this sample have been doing ministry for several years, varying from six to twenty-seven years, and 91.6% in assessment of their ministry claim that they are flourishing as pastors. God is not biased, and the spreading of the gospel does not require any particular gender or setting. Several participants made mention of Jesus and women, such as the Samaritan woman who went and invited others to come meet Jesus, and the women who were early at the tomb and reported to the men the good news of Jesus’ resurrection. God loves his creation and wants the message of salvation to be shared with everyone in

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<sup>5</sup> Patricia Gundry, *Woman Be Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1979), 19.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, *Beyond the Stained-Glass Ceiling*, x.

<sup>7</sup> Carroll Osburn, *Women in the Church: Reclaiming the ideal* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2001), 47.

<sup>8</sup> Aida Besançon Spencer, *Beyond the Curse Women Called to Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1985), 14.

<sup>9</sup> Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 135.

the world irrespective of gender, economic state, culture, or social standing. He has called for workers and leaders, and those who answer the call, both male and female, need to be acknowledged, encouraged, and empowered. We must work together to overcome all the challenges.

### **Challenges and Restrictions Experienced by Female Pastors in St. Catherine and Kingston, Jamaica**

Life on earth and the ministry of Jesus Christ is accompanied by multiple challenges. In this study I have found that there is a problem with the existing level of spirituality, lack of passion and commitment to the things of God, inconsistency, and immaturity. All is not well regarding the evangelism and discipleship process.

Parishioners are described as immature and overly busy. Challenges are not restricted to one gender; both men and women will at different times create trials for the female pastor. Challenges arise when some congregants intentionally or unintentionally neglect worship opportunities, are absent from Bible study and prayer sessions, and do not seem to see the importance of being discipled and becoming available faithful stewards of the Lord. People are not available to go on mission trips. This brings to mind the sayings of Jesus, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matthew 9:37-38).

Some of the challenges are connected to the alluring outreach methods of other religious groups. Christians, for whatever reason, sometimes lose their faith in Christ and are drawn to other religions; Revivalism and Islam are mentioned. As the years go by, changes are occurring in the religious environment; more diverse religions are arising alongside Christianity. Pastors need to become alert, to prepare

themselves and the people they lead, to deal with the challenges from having within the communities, people with new ideologies.

The pastors' citing of certain undesirable practices among congregants, such as displays of jealousy, negative attitudes, resistance to and rejection of female leaders, among other ills, can be linked to faulty spirituality rising out of cultural traditions, misunderstanding of Scripture, and lack of application. Sometimes the pastors are discouraged that transformation is not proportionate with the effort being made to promote spiritual transformation and development. While faith is an important component of Christian ministry, problems still result from what is observed. Hyacinth Boothe, a Jamaican female theologian, who in years gone by has done ministry in the island, made mention of the self-interest, greed, covetousness, desire for more and more money, the lust for power, and competitive mentality that exists in the Jamaican culture and undoubtedly will affect even Christians.<sup>10</sup> These challenges identified are real and have their direct impact on the women in ministry in Jamaica. The nature of the problems experienced by women in ministry vary from one context to another. (It would also be interesting to discover the experiences in urban, suburban, and rural Jamaica.)

It is essential to have money to procure needed goods and services and to take care of the basic needs in life. In many Christian communities, stewardship is emphasized, since the church is depended on voluntary giving, particularly of tithes and offerings. I expected a lack in the area of financial resources; some participants remarked that there was irregularity in tithing and giving in some local congregations. The average Jamaican is presently affected by the high cost of living, and a limited amount of money is available to be spent. Do all church members choose not to be

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<sup>10</sup> Hyacinth Boothe, "Women—Ministerial Formation and Ministry: A Caribbean Perspective," *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies* 17, no. 1 (April 1996): 21.

good stewards, and are the principles of good stewardship taught to the people? In Church of God of Prophecy Jamaica, there is a set amount of money that creates a base for pastors' remuneration; however, the finance committee of the local church ultimately determines the amount the pastor will receive on the basis of the availability of funds and the involvement of the pastor in the church and community. The size of the congregation and the economic level of the members will determine how much money the pastor will receive.

Those pastors in local churches where funds are not available will undoubtedly have financial struggles and challenges with caring for family and personal needs; lack of transportation was mentioned. Not only the pastor's salary but also many other things are impacted by limited finances. The participants in the area under consideration mentioned unfinished church buildings, incomplete projects at the church property and in the community, the need for additional facilities and equipment, and inability to assist needy members, among other things. It is incumbent on the pastor to guide the congregation in making plans to solve the existing problems. There is less stress where there is united effort.

The popular assumption is that the community does not desire to have women as pastors, but apparently a paradigm shift has taken place, because 75% of the women in ministry who participated in this study feel that they are accepted by those in the community. In some communities there may be degrees of subtle reluctance at the beginning, which often changes as the pastor begins to go forward with ministry. Within the church there seem to be some uncertainty. Half of the female pastors disagree with the statement that the male COGOP membership in Jamaica is pleased with the large numbers of female pastors, and almost 50% gave a neutral response, showing their uncertainty. Some effort needs to be made by the brothers in the Lord

to show their sisters that they love, appreciate, and are pleased with all that is done for the glory of God. All Christians belong to one big family. Men need to be taught to look at the outstanding work being done by female ministers for the advancement of the kingdom irrespective of the many other demands on them.

The majority of seemingly positive responses in this study suggest that the majority of male pastors are willing to celebrate the work being done by women in ministry; they need to let their voices be heard in public endorsement. Repeatedly there is the testimony of prominent men in COGOP who testify that they have been mentored by women, that their lives have been like Apollos and they were taught by a Priscilla.

In Pentecostal or even evangelical circles sometimes the fact is ignored that men and women begin a life-changing and challenging journey when they embrace God's call to serve as ordained clergy. Approval and affirmation is sometimes not given because it is seen as carnal or worldly to desire such. It is good that some of the female participants can acknowledge that they are fortified by being in various healthy relationships with their leaders, friends, district supervisors, Ministerial Fraternity, and some male colleagues. Challenges are harder to cope with when instead of affirmation and support there is either criticism and or rejection. Pastoral ministry is challenging, and "it is preposterous to think such a life can be well lived and such a calling faithfully discharged in the absence of affirmation, support and continuing care, given the nature of the pressures of ministry."<sup>11</sup> These female pastors also claim that sometimes there is support from those in the top level of leadership.

Some persons in this study claim to get varying degrees of support in ministry from family, particularly husbands and children. There are some with hard-working,

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<sup>11</sup> Kimberly Ervin Alexander and James Bowers. *What Women Want: Pentecostal Women Ministers Speak for Themselves* (Lanham, MD: Seymour Press, 2013), 70-71.

supportive husbands, and there are others who have no choice but to seek to deal with the struggles on their own. There is also the task of having to juggle activities to ensure that the family is cared for. It is a good thing to be engaged in church work; however, as stated by Nick Cuthbert, families must be cherished and not be neglected.<sup>12</sup> Kate Coleman also admonishes that “while family is accorded great significance in the Bible it never competes with discipleship. Whatever the size or shape of our family, it has the potential to contribute something of great value to God’s purposes.”<sup>13</sup> One can assume that while some families of church leaders are commended by the parishioners, others face unpleasant challenges, when particularly the children are assessed and lambasted.

Of significance are the personality, values, self-esteem, and attitudes of each individual. Our expectations and how we relate to others can positively or negatively affect all areas of our life. There is the reality of historical discrimination, oppression, and gender biases. The feelings and response of the female pastors will certainly play a role in their ministry. Is an effort made to work alongside the men, or are attempts made to harshly correct, put down, or compete with the male pastors? The number of female pastors is increasing, and more women are desiring to be prepared for ministry. What is the response of the female pastors to the barriers, criticism, and rejection that they encounter? Only a woman aware of her valuable and unique experiences can survive the challenges of Christian ministry. While personality and response are important, they are beyond the scope of this study.

It is known that certain leadership roles were reserved for men, irrespective of how many gifted, capable, and empowered women were available. I found that

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<sup>12</sup> Nick Cuthbert, *How to Survive and Thrive as a Church Leader* (Oxford: Monarch Books, 2006), 63.

<sup>13</sup> Kate Coleman, *7 Deadly Sins of Women in Leadership: Overcome Self-Defeating Behavior in Work and Ministry* (Birmingham, UK: Next Leadership, 2010), 285.

COGOP is classified by participants as patriarchal and that results in women still being barred from top-level leadership of the church. Desiring to know more on why women are excluded from top-level leadership of the church, I listed some assumptions in a multiple-choice question, and based on the responses I found that for 91.7% of participants it is quite simple: some men are uncomfortable with women in leadership. Of the respondents, 50% said that women in leadership will not be accepted by the church, meaning both male and female. By their choice 91.7% indicated that *in Jamaican culture, men are the ones who occupy top leadership positions.* No one selected that women have limited educational ability, since it is obvious that women are becoming educated. Particularly in the church, the culture still has men at the top, qualified or not. This finding is consistent with the comment by Smith that “in many ways churches have remained captive to the patriarchal character of the larger culture.”<sup>14</sup>

Many will agree that the church is to be directed by the Spirit of God, the Word of God, and not by the culture. However, the human factor plays a significant role in the establishment of barriers against women in Christian ministry. Now is time for the church to take action to ensure that the purposes of God are accomplished and to bear in mind, within the context, that many of the local churches, even those being pastored by some objectors to women in leadership, were started by women.

Are there any other restrictions placed on women in COGOP in Kingston and St. Catherine, Jamaica? In COGOP Jamaica, the top-level leadership is comprised of the national overseer and parish overseers. All these overseers have been and are men. The national overseer selects his administrative team from among the parish overseers, along with financial and other committees. Does leadership at the top level

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<sup>14</sup> Smith, *Beyond the Stained-Glass Ceiling*, 36.

belong only to the male gender? Women are in the majority in the church; are all the women comfortable with an arrangement that exempts the voice of the majority? It is wrong to assume that all females are concerned about limitations to positions that they can occupy in the church. Some are quite comfortable because they are of the opinion that men should be the top leaders. A small segment, 16.7%, indicated that women should not be allowed to occupy the position of parish overseers. Fifty percent of the sample agree that women should be allowed to occupy the position. Of the female pastors, 33.3% selected the neutral option instead of choosing between the other positive and negative options.

The question was also given to the male pastors, and 50% also selected the neutral option. Of the male respondents, 33.3% agree that women can occupy the position, but 16.7% strongly disagree. Based on the response of the participants to other questions regarding male and female, they gave the impression that they were sharing the egalitarian view that there should be equal ministry opportunities for both male and female. But when a post is identified, such as that of parish overseer, the majority wavered between being in agreement and remaining neutral. It would seem that further study needs to be done to ascertain the true feelings of the pastors regarding selection of top-level leaders. The positions should not be connected to a particular gender; it should be about who is qualified to get the job done effectively. There are individuals and churches that would rather have an unqualified man than a qualified woman. The concern should not be whether the minister is a man or a woman but whether the minister can perform duties efficiently.

In the Bible, women were shown as co-receivers of spiritual gifts. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured on male and female alike. Pentecostalism created a new religious culture, but it did not readily remove all the biases and women

were not all free to flow with the leading of the Holy Spirit to do anything as directed. In some parts of the world women are flowing in the power of the Holy Spirit and are helping to advance the cause of Christ, in spite of the prohibitions that exist within certain denominations.

In the church there are many humanly erected barriers. The female participants in this study made mention of female appearance, hair, and dress. In the past, within the Pentecostal church holiness was attached to external appearance, and much emphasis was placed on the apparel of godly women; there were several do's and don'ts for the women, particularly for female ministers. Various restrictions are placed on women by the church and the society in general. There are still those who will criticize if their pastor is clad in an old-fashioned manner, too trendy, or too nicely adorned to be what they consider as a good representative of Christ.

Challenges vary from one denomination to another, and even within the same denomination there are differences. Is there any point in arguing over the issue, or in trying to convince others? While both male and female face challenges in ministry, women face multiple, unique hardships. Some of the challenges result from personal situations which must be dealt with, such as physical limitations and disorders; mention was made of emotional and social needs. There would also be other unmet needs and pains from the past. Even with challenges of their own, female pastors have God-given ability to play a vital role in the life, work, and ministry of the church.

This qualitative research allows the women in the research from the parishes of St. Catherine and Kingston to express their views based on their experiences, ideas, and the environment within which they work. The base from which they operate is unknown, who or what has influenced their world view is not known, but their input is necessary to help create the setting that is suitable for the women who are in the

majority in the church. Ministry must be done by male and female, but as stated by Boothe, “it must be borne in mind that women are in the majority and female ministers must at some points seek to engage in ministry to the women . . . so they will be empowered and equipped to rise up and affirm their integrity as members of the body of Christ able to take their places in all decision-making process of church and state.”<sup>15</sup>

In the past, not much writing has been done by the women and for the women in the church in this region. Stories are told about the significant work done by women of God in the past, but not much has been written. This study is a contribution to the knowledge base and practice of practical ministry.

There are several things evident from the study. Some aspects of these findings are consistent with previous research: “often the most vocal opponent of female pastors were not men but other women. Some women view female clergy as being ‘out of biblical order,’ usurping authority of men in the church . . . In the minds of these individuals, the clergy woman’s assertion that God has called her to lead a congregation seems heretical.”<sup>16</sup> Women are called by God to proclaim by their lips and life the good news of Jesus. That should be the main focus. There is no need to become insensitive and callous in order to demand respect. There is no need to go to the extreme to prove any point or gain acceptance. Of concern should be to work for Christ and his church. Concern needs to be given to paving the way for those who are yet to come. In an environment where there is recognition, love, affirmation, and honor, there will be no need to struggle.

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<sup>15</sup> Boothe, “Women—Ministerial Formation and Ministry,” 20.

<sup>16</sup> Smith, *Beyond the Stained- Glass Ceiling*, 37.

## **How Equipped Are Female Pastors in St. Catherine and Kingston?**

In the past, Pentecostals were viewed as poor and illiterate, other worldly, people of the Spirit, tongue talkers, and some were even ashamed to admit publicly that they were filled by the Holy Spirit. Some were highly critical of those who placed priority on biblical scholarship. Now many Pentecostals are thinking, studying, and writing. A paradigm shift seems to have taken place, but there are still many challenges. Some men and women who have not been exposed would rather have as a leader an unqualified man than a woman filled by the Holy Spirit and qualified.

I have found that the female pastors are equipped and trained, ready to move ahead with ministry in a positive way. God has placed gifts and anointing irrespective of the gender. In the past there was not much emphasis placed on study; training in the church was confined to seminars and workshops. Now the international church has been supporting and encouraging all leaders, male and female, to engage in leadership development and training. It is significant improvement that 50% of these twelve female pastors are seminary trained; 63.6% have earned masters' degrees, not just in their secular profession but in religion. With biblical training, continued learning, and application of the spiritual disciplines, the female pastors will certainly become better ministers, and that should also play a role in helping them to deal with some of the challenges. Education and training are necessary for those who are serious about pursuing ministry. There is no place for ignorance.

Coleman has pointed out that "the culture of leadership is experiencing some of its greatest changes, consequently there will be challenges."<sup>17</sup> It is good to know that the women are being prepared to cope. Even some women in the church view female clergy as being out of place and occupying positions that should be filled by

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<sup>17</sup> Coleman, *7 Deadly Sins of Women in Leadership*, 32-33.

the men. The research sample is small in number, but it shows that there is still the belief that men should be the leaders. Years ago, that was the established pattern in many regions of the world, and not everyone is cognizant of changes that are taking place. It follows that the future of ministry in Jamaica is not dependent on any one gender but on the involvement of both men and women in the ministry of the church. This research is not being made to replace the men with female clergy; rather, it is a call for united effort to combat some challenges. Female pastors should keep reminding themselves that they are in the service of God and that challenges are inevitable. Also, women ministers must aim to be supportive of one another instead of being in competition with each other. Consequently, none will be victims. All belonging to the family of God will succeed.

### **How to Address Some Challenges of Women in Ministry**

As long as we live on earth there will be challenges of one kind or another. The blame game will not prove to be helpful. Instead, effort must be made to cope, to deal with what we can, to seek help, and some things have to be placed in the hand of God who is able to do more than we can ask or think. Women in ministry will have to personally try to deal with some of their challenges. Each one will have to evaluate all areas of her life, including ministry, in a realistic and practical way identify the problems she faces, and then make plans to solve them. Some cases require networking and bonding with others, irrespective of gender. Sometimes non-Christians are excluded from our contacts and they are the ones that need to be in touch with believers, who are the salt and the light of the world.

Also, to help address challenges of women in ministry, Coleman suggests

- Overcome limiting self-perceptions.

- Establish healthy boundaries.
- Develop and refine a personal vision.
- Cultivate a healthy work-life rhythm.
- Resist being a people pleaser.
- Learn to confront and not collude.
- Be intentional with your inner circle.<sup>18</sup>

The following *Words of Wisdom for Women Clergy* are given by Smith:

- Avoid going to parishioners with personal issues.
- Constantly renew your mind. Stay focused and study God's Word.
- Don't be envious of other ministries because that is like having weak ankles.
- Be open to non-traditional places to minister outside of the church. This will open more doors for you and give you exposure.
- You have to deal with your own issues and insecurities before you can help others.
- Have a safe place where you can go to be ministered to and have a time of rest. Seek spiritual mothers and fathers who will help when we need counsel.
- Allow yourself to be engaged in endeavors beyond the local church. Seek a definition that is larger than just the pastorate. The pastorate is very important and sacred calling, but not the alpha and omega of ministry.<sup>19</sup>

Help to address the challenges faced by women in ministry can also come from Boothe, the Jamaican female theologian who willingly admitted challenges but stated that

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<sup>18</sup> Coleman, *7 Deadly Sins of Women in Leadership*, 302.

<sup>19</sup> Smith, *Beyond the Stained-Glass Ceiling*, 169.

- “in the Caribbean the contemporary church has inherited a hierarchical authoritarian, privileged type of ministry. We must look at it critically. Let us not ape our brothers but bring in something new, something fresh, something dynamic.”<sup>20</sup>
- “it is required of us that we play a vital role in freeing our Caribbean sisters, and in equipping them for their historic mission. It is our task to engage in an evangelical crusade for the redemption of Caribbean womanhood—a redemption both spiritual and social.”<sup>21</sup>
- “God is calling women and women should go to God, not hiding behind masculine perceptions, masculine interpretations, masculine projections, but let us bring to God our feminine perceptions, interpretations and sensitivities. Let us bring to God our experience of what it means to be a woman.”<sup>22</sup>
- “It is the empowering hand of the Holy Spirit that is resting on us, this is where we ought to latch on to as women ministers.”<sup>23</sup>
- “perhaps the Caribbean experience highlights as no other can, the trauma, and dilemma of being a woman. Not only are we faced with the problem of gender, but also of race and class . . . cultural norms dictated that their bondage to their male partners remained intact. It also meant the continuation of subjection, as black women.”<sup>24</sup>
- “there is no true servant of the Lord who is not challenged by the Lord to deny self, take up the cross and follow Him . . . more costly for women than for men to be the Lord’s Minister . . . eyes are fixed upon us . . . is

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<sup>20</sup> Boothe, “Women—Ministerial Formation and Ministry,” 20.

<sup>21</sup> Boothe, “Women—Ministerial Formation and Ministry,” 20.

<sup>22</sup> Boothe, “Women—Ministerial Formation and Ministry,” 15.

<sup>23</sup> Boothe, “Women—Ministerial Formation and Ministry,” 19.

<sup>24</sup> Boothe, “Women—Ministerial Formation and Ministry,” 19.

expected of us a dedication in excess of that expected of men, and we need in our ministerial formation to put on Christ.”<sup>25</sup>

## **Recommendations**

Here are certain recommendations specifically arising from this descriptive case study of women in ministry in St. Catherine and Kingston, Jamaica. In the past, in the ministry of Church of God of Prophecy the majority of leaders seem to have been of the opinion that they needed only to depend heavily on the Holy Spirit to do the work of God. Few eager scholars on their own studied at several seminaries, but recently seminary training has become an integral part of the international organization, and this connection with Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary has influenced the leaders of the nations of the world, including the areas of St. Catherine and Kingston, Jamaica. According to Walter Hollenweger, the environment among Pentecostal intellectuals is changing. They have come awake to their past and they have begun to enter the scholarly dialogue on many issues.<sup>26</sup> The whole matter of theological training and development gives a fresh perspective, a new mindset to ministry. Effort is being made to look at the Scripture within its context, to rightly divide the Word of God, and to still depend on the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

There are many people who continue to mix cultural tradition with the Scriptures, and some are not being enlightened because they are not students of the Word of God. Yet they will address particular issues such as the role of women in ministry based on their own assumptions. Some people seem satisfied with an upbeat, high energy presentation of the Word in sermons, a time when there is no opportunity to ask questions and have explanations of the text. The ideal response is

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<sup>25</sup> Boothe, “Women—Ministerial Formation and Ministry,” 10.

<sup>26</sup> Walter Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 197.

to make an effort to learn, as has been done by several of the participants in this study and promote learning. Like Mary, who sat at the feet of Jesus, women in ministry should seek out and sit at the feet of individuals who truly know God and his Word and are willing to share. Not everyone will be able to attend a seminary; however, everyone needs to learn the basics of the Christian faith. Preachers and teachers must seek to know and disseminate the Word of God to help people overcome biblical illiteracy and negative thinking. Emphasis has to be placed on Christian Education at all levels.

The discipleship program must be cherished by the present generation and needs to be passed on to the next generation. “If every decade of women would love the generation coming up behind them, this world would be a great place for women . . . the many cultural pressures modern women face—media messages, premarital sex, domestic abuse, eating disorders, and alcohol and drug abuse.”<sup>27</sup> The Bible commands the older women to instruct the younger ones on how to live (Titus 2:3-5). Presently in Jamaica, younger ones with the desire for ministry seem to be missing. They must be sought out and specially targeted for Christian Education and empowerment.

Challenges can be turned into opportunities, and sometimes there are certain benefits that can be gained from the challenges. Irrespective of the challenges experienced in ministry and the debates that are ongoing, it still stands that “the calling to be a leader in the church is one of the greatest privilege in the world.”<sup>28</sup> Christian ministry is for time and eternity.

The church is one big family in Christ. Instead of individualistic effort there is need for unity among leaders, male and female, more communication, networking and

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<sup>27</sup> Camerin Courtney, “Empowering Modern Church Ladies”, *Women and the Church* (USA: Christianity Today International, 2007), 10.

<sup>28</sup> Cuthbert, *How to Survive and Thrive as a Church Leader*, 9.

support system. In the church, praise testimonies are given, but it is not natural to give testimonies of struggles, trials, and problems, particularly if one is the pastor. Different forums need to be created for leaders to share with each other and pray together. Problems need to be confronted so the leaders can be overcomers and go forward with ministry in powerful ways.

The issue of female inferiority should not be kept under the carpet but addressed in public forums such as ministers' conferences, seminars, with presentations, and literature regarding passages that are not clear to all, such as 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11. People need to be guided so they will know that women, like men, are also servants of God and should be treated accordingly.

As stated by the Associated Press, in Jamaica, "more women are receiving advanced degrees even as a number also juggle household and child-rearing responsibilities. But while government officials and educators celebrate that fact they also have serious worries about stagnating men, who have lower levels of academic achievement and are at increased risk of falling into criminality, trends that undermine the gains by females."<sup>29</sup> While attention is directed at females, there is need for an intentional, holistic approach to ministry. Not only females need the gospel, but new methods need to be used to target the males in the population, locally and abroad. In addition, the need of this century is not just to have church as usual but for all leaders to truly be equipped to teach the younger generation who have a narrow biblical worldview.

The Christian ministry cannot be confined within the walls of the local church. God wants for the church to "seek the peace of the city" (Jeremiah. 29:7). Although

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<sup>29</sup> Associated Press, "Women Are Doing Better Than Men in Jamaica," February 13, 2015, accessed February 10, 2017, [www.news.com.au/.../women...doing-better-than-men...jamaica/.../c1c72242d6ed4dd...](http://www.news.com.au/.../women...doing-better-than-men...jamaica/.../c1c72242d6ed4dd...)

no mention was made by participants in this research, one of the main challenges in the Caribbean, particularly the island of Jamaica, is crime and violence. Godly women with training must let their voices be heard in the discussions that are taking place in the public square. Woman ministers in their various stations must encourage, initiate, and participate in such discussions and programs.

Women in ministry will continue to face challenges of one kind or another. Many of the challenges are based on biblical interpretation and cultural traditions. As time goes by, changes are gradually taking place, and effort must be made to remove what can become barriers to effective ministry. Those in church leadership all over the world must do all they can, to guard against issues of stereotyping and presumption; they would do well to see that God is glorified. No one should be allowed to insist on gender association or take for granted the privileges and responsibilities of certain ranks in ministry. All false assumptions must be avoided as male and female avail themselves to the Spirit of God and work together for the advancement of the kingdom of God. The work of Christian ministry is quite complex, but with the help of the Spirit of God much can be accomplished through combined male and female effort in Jamaica and the World.

APPENDIX A  
QUESTIONNAIRE

**Project Title:** The Challenges of Women in Ministry in the Church of God of Prophecy: A Case Study in Kingston and St. Catherine, Jamaica.

Questionnaire for Female Pastors

*Select an answer for each question below.*

**1) Scripture is not clear about women in church leadership.**

Strongly agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**2) Only women face challenges to effective church ministry.**

Strongly agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**3) As a female Pastor you are fortified by ... (Circle 2)**

Other      Male      Ministerial      Tele-  
female      colleagues      Fraternity      evangelists  
pastors

**4) Women presently "oversee" local congregations, they should also be allowed to occupy the position of parish overseer, that is to oversee multiple congregations.**

Strongly agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**5) Women are restricted from some leadership positions in COGOP because (Circle 3 reasons):**

- a). Women are too emotional
- b). Limited educational ability
- c). Some men are uncomfortable with women in leadership
- d). They will not be accepted by the church.
- e). Women are weaker vessels.
- f). There are not many female leaders in the Bible
- g). In the Jamaican culture men are the ones who occupy top leadership' positions

**6) God uses both male and female in ministry?**

Strongly agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**7) As a female pastor in Jamaica are you encouraged by your COGOP leaders.**

Yes      No      Sometimes

**8) The male COGOP membership in Jamaica is pleased with the large number of female pastors.**

True      False

**9) I receive salary/wages for ministry work.**

Yes      No

**10) According to the Bible women and men have full and equal authority in the church.**

True      False

**11) The attitude of community to female pastor;**

Very Acceptable      Acceptable      Neutral      Unacceptable      Very Unacceptable

**12) What is your highest education level?**

Less than a High School Graduate      University Graduate      Seminary Graduate  
High School Graduate      Graduate

**13) What is your highest certification level?**

High school diploma      Associate degree      Bachelors      Masters      Doctorate

**14) Women are flourishing as pastors.**

Strongly agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree

**15) Where do you find support in ministry?**

Friends family      Parents      District  
Overseer      Other

**16) What are some of the main obstacles that you have encountered as a female pastor?**

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**17) Number of years serving as pastor \_\_\_\_\_**

**18) Do you enjoy being a pastor? \_\_\_\_\_**

**19) In addition to being a pastor you have another job.**

True      False

**20) Which of these age categories apply to you?**

40 - 49

50 - 59

60 - 69

70 - 79

**21) How did you get into ministry?**

- a). God called
- b). had nothing else to do
- c). was chosen because no man was available
- d). decision of a senior leader.

**22) How many members are in your congregation?**

Less than 49, 50-100, 101-150, 151-200, above 200

Questions for Male Pastors

**Challenges of Women in Ministry in the Church of God of Prophecy. A Case Study in Kingston and St. Catherine, Jamaica.**

*Circle an answer to each question 1-4 below. Write the answers for Questions 5 & 6*

**1) Scripture teaches against women in leadership roles.**

Strongly agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**2) Women are capable to serve in church leadership.**

Strongly agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**3) God desires only men to be leaders.**

Strongly agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**4) Woman presently "oversee" local congregations, they should also be allowed to occupy the position of parish overseer that is to oversee multiple congregations.**

Strongly agree    Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**5) What are some challenges that women in ministry seem to have?**

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**6) What suggestions would you give to the women in ministry in your region?**

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**APPENDIX B**  
**INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT**

**Project Title:** The Challenges of Women in Ministry in the Church of God of Prophecy: A Case Study in Kingston and St. Catherine, Jamaica.

Principal Investigator: Sonia Martin. D.Min. Global Pentecostalism

**PURPOSE**

This is a research study. The purpose is to identify the Challenges of Women in ministry in COGOP, Kingston and St. Catherine, Jamaica. This research will provide information to assist me in writing the thesis needed to complete my D.Min study. The church will know what are the issues that women in ministry- specifically female pastors, are having and those in leadership will be better able to do what needs to be done to address the issues, this will help to bring clear understanding and offer support to the advancement of the Ministry of this and other Christian Churches. Also undoubtedly the information will be helpful in other forums where the role of women in the church is being discussed. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. You may ask any questions about the research, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear.

We are inviting you to participate in this research study because you are known to be a pastor who is actively engaged in several areas of ministry within the church and community.

**PROCEDURES**

If you agree to participate, your involvement will last for approximately one hour in one or two contacts.

The following procedures are involved in this study. July- Focus is on writing Chapter 2- Lit review, August-Chapter 3- Biblical and Theological Framework, September, chapter 4-project design, October- Chapter 5- Outcomes. Contact will be made with you in the month of August.

## **RISKS**

The possible risks associated with participating in this research project are as follows. There are no foreseeable risks to participate.

## **BENEFITS**

There are no personal benefits for participating, but I anticipate that, in the future, society may benefit from this study and be better able to understand the role and challenges of women in Christian Ministry.

## **COMPENSATION**

You will not be compensated for participating in this research project.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Records of participation in this research project will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. An identification number will be written on your returned response, which will be stored in my office and the contents will not be discussed with any specific mention of your name. In the event of any report or publication from this study, your identity will not be disclosed. Results will be reported in a summarized manner in such a way that you cannot be identified.

## **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

Taking part in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you agree to participate in this study, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to take part, or if you stop participating at any time, your decision will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled. Any data collected from you will be included in the study results.

## **QUESTIONS**

Questions are encouraged. If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: Sonia Martin (345)924-1303, [sonvirginia@yahoo.com](mailto:sonvirginia@yahoo.com). If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board at: Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary.

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed):

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**RESEARCHER STATEMENT**

I have discussed the above points with the participant. It is my opinion that the participant understands the risks, benefits, and procedures involved with participation in this research study.

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(Signature of Researcher)

(Date)

APPENDIX C  
UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**Challenges of Women in Ministry in the Church of God of Prophecy. A Case Study in Kingston and St. Catherine, Jamaica.**

Unstructured interview questions for female Pastors

1) What is the Biblical explanation/justification that COGOP can make for allowing women to be engaged in ministry?

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2) Comment on background information for interpreting certain Biblical passages such as 1 Cor. 14: 34 & 1 Timothy 2:12- “women must be silent in the church.”

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3. What can be done to alleviate some of the challenges being faced by women in ministry?

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**Challenges of Women in Ministry in the Church of God of Prophecy. A Case Study in Kingston and St. Catherine, Jamaica.**

Unstructured interview questions for male pastors

- 1) What are your thoughts about women being allowed full participation in ministry?

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- 2) The number of female pastors are increasing, is that positive/negative for the church?

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3. What should be done to ensure the advancement of ministry in a Biblical manner?

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## VITA

Sonia Virginia Martin was born in Manchester, Jamaica.

She submitted her life to Jesus in 1970 and became an active member of Church of God of Prophecy.

Sonia is a graduate of Manchester High School and Mico Teacher's College, Jamaica.

She graduated from University of the West Indies, Jamaica, with a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and Master of Education (M.Ed.). She also graduated from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary with Master of Arts in Religion and plans to be a Doctor of Ministry graduate in May 2018.

Sonia is married to Clayton since 1981; the family lives in Grand Cayman. She is the mother of one daughter, Sheree. Sonia is full-time in ministry alongside her husband Clayton, who was appointed as pastor of COGOP Grand Cayman (1980), National Overseer of Jamaica (1999–2010), and General Presbyter of the Caribbean (2010 to the present). The Martins enjoy doing the work of God. What really matters is using the present time to prepare for eternity, the good of others, the glory of God, and ultimately to hear the Master say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."